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THE ACE OF HEARTS.

I.

THE Opera Ball is an older and more enduring institution than any of the French political creations of the last eighty years. It has survived five kings, two emperors, and two republics, for it dates back to 1716, when it was founded by the Chevalier de Bouillon. This scion of a famous family, who was seeking to make himself conspicuous, invented the double floor which placed the pit on the same level as the stage. Louis XIV was dead ; Madame de Maintenon was hiding at Saint-Cyr the widow's cap of a left-handed marriage ; Paris, weary of fasting and penance, darted after pleasure like some school-boy running away from a stern master's rod. Philip of Orleans, as kind a ruler as ever lived, was governing emancipated France. The Regency was beginning, a mild Regency, which, everything taken into consideration, was, compared to the severe monarchical rule of the "Great King," much the same as the Directoire in comparison with the tyranny of the Committee of Public Safety : that is to say, a period of universal freedom, and a change to gaiety. Every one thirsted for liberty and pleasure, and especially for pleasure. That must be obtained at any cost ; and whatever least resembled the formal etiquette and prim enjoyments of Versailles was most welcome.

M. de Bouillon's device was a work of genius, for the opera ball seemed invented for the express purpose of bringing both Court and city together, nobles and citizens, great ladies and *grisettes*. The Regent, who led the child-monarch's merry band of subjects, was so charmed with the idea that he rewarded the fortunate inventor with a pension of six thousand livres. The opera-house, which had been built in a wing of the Palais Royal by Cardinal de Richelieu, and opened by him to bring out his tragedy, "Mirame," and in which Molière had several of his best plays produced, was, in the first place, superb, but for the past four years of its glorious history it had begun to deteriorate. Nevertheless, those who were in pursuit of pleasure had been making merry in this theatre during the Carnival of 1720. The season was undeniably the most brilliant that Paris had seen since the beginning of the new reign. Law's "system" was at its height ; the bank founded by this bold innovator was performing financial miracles, and France was rolling, not in gold or silver—for no one cared for those vile metals—but in stock of the "Mississippi Company"—magical scraps of paper which turned lackeys into opulent lords in the space of an hour. Crowds assembled during the daytime in the Rue Quincampoix, where the "fair of millions" was held, and the same crowds rushed at night to the opera ball.

The ball given on the night of February 9th, of that triumphant year, had attracted the most influential, the richest, and gayest people in Paris.

The public was provided for in almost the same way as now-a-days. In the pit there strolled about numerous masked figures dressed in character or fancy dress, whilst the boxes were filled with men and women wearing dominos and also masked. Others were in full dress, and with their faces visible. But no one danced. People contented themselves with intrigue, an amusement which had its charm in a place where a mere soldier of fortune could court the greatest lady of the kingdom, where the humblest citizen's daughter could hope to captivate the Regent himself, who did not scorn to appear there very often *incognito*.

Instead of a brass band and the wild howls and crazy stamping which now constitute the "harmony" of a masked ball, all that was heard from the motley crowd was a soft murmurous whispering, accompanied by the softened sound of a very quiet orchestra. No one howled, everybody conversed in that soft, veiled tone of voice the secret of which has been lost in France since politics and steam-engines have begun to be so very noisy. Flirtations were carried on in tones so subdued that those who were not engaged in gallant conversation themselves could easily hear what their neighbours were saying, whereas the noise now habitual would have covered all sound of voices.

Listening appeared to be the favourite amusement of two gentlemen in dominos who, with evidently intentional persistence, kept themselves aloof from the crowd at the entrance of the dancing-floor, near a box occupied by a very talkative couple.

A woman was seated in this box in a careless attitude, and, leaning upon the velvet-covered hand-rest, was making gay replies to the lively compliments of a young nobleman who sat behind her. It was no easy matter to tell what kind of figure or face she might have, as she was dressed as a bat, a fashionable disguise at the time. It consisted of two black skirts, one of which was belted at the waist, and the other brought down over the head in such a way as to form two wings in front and two horns behind. With this attire and a mask over one's face, it was easy to baffle the most intrusive curiosity.

The lady's acquaintance, on the contrary, was distinctly visible, for he had not taken the precaution to mask himself, and displayed his rich Court dress with evident satisfaction. Tall, well-formed, and with a lofty carriage, he appeared at most twenty-two, and might be called a very handsome young man. He had a fresh complexion, blue eyes, white teeth, a broad brow, and an aquiline nose. A single fault marred the charm of his countenance: the ease with which his expression changed from tenderness to anger. It must be added that the conversation varied as much as the gentleman's face. "Madame," said he, with great softness of manner, "will you not pity a forlorn stranger, who does not care to know any one but you in Paris, since he loves no one but you, and would be happy to give his life in exchange for permission to see you again?"

"My dear count," replied the bat, with a coquettish air, "cease teasing me, and go away. I am waiting for the Duke of Orleans, and if he found you in my box——"

"If he found me here, I should stay here," defiantly replied the young man. "I am of as high a house as his, and I will prove it to him."

The conversation went on with the same alternate entreaties and angry outbreaks. The two gentlemen who stood below the box did not lose a word of what was said, and, from time to time, they nudged one another, as though to keep each other's attention fixed upon the disconnected words

which they overheard. The taller of the pair presently leaned towards his companion, and whispered : "Now I know who they are."

"The bat is the Marchioness de Parabère, is she not ?" replied the other in the same tone.

"Yes, and her admirer is Count de Horn."

"What ! the son of old Prince de Horn, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Ramillies, and whom I once saw at Brussels ?"

"The younger son. He was an officer in the Austrian army : he has just been put on half pay."

"And he is courting Madame de Parabère ? Good heavens ! this may serve our turn."

"That is my own opinion. But did you hear that Philip was coming ?"

"I count upon that."

"So do I, for I have given orders accordingly. All our men are about, so that if an opportunity offered to-night for carrying off the Regent, we should be able to profit by it."

"Humph ! I am afraid that you have made them come here for nothing. Philip does not think of being on his guard ; but then that ferret Dubois, and that old fox Argenson, do not quit him any more than his shadow. The theatre must be full of their spies."

"That may be ; fortunately our people are able to baffle their watchfulness. At all hazards, I have the carriage ready, with relays to the frontier."

"A wise precaution, but, speaking of Argenson and his police, has La Valeur got rid of that miserable police officer who has been buzzing about us for the last month ?"

"Not yet ; but he told me that he expected to do so to-day."

"So be it, colonel ! I do not know why I feel as though the rascal would do us some mischief."

"Be at ease on that score, chevalier ; our brave La Valeur will settle his account. Meantime let us listen to what is being said up there."

The conversation ceased, and the pair again listened to the tender whispers exchanged in the box near them ; but this time they could not hear what was said. Count de Horn had progressed in the siege which he had made upon the heart of the marchioness, and was now speaking in so low a tone to her, that it was impossible to hear a word of his impassioned wooing.

"The devil take the young fool and that coquette !" said the shorter of the masked listeners, in a low tone.

"Silence !" whispered his companion, clutching his arm—at the moment when the box-door opened. "If it be Philip coming in," added the speaker, "we shall see an interesting sight, and there are our friends on the watch in the lobby. Perhaps something may be done to-night."

The opening of the box-door had admitted a man in a domino, accompanied by two superbly dressed noblemen, one of whom was tall, dark, and thin, the other shorter, stouter, and paler. The watchful pair turned quickly round and stared at the newcomers. As for Madame de Parabère, she started and drew back from the count, who was as near to her as he could contrive to be, but he did not even condescend to raise his head, and persisted in his gallantries without troubling himself about the newcomers.

"Good evening, marchioness," exclaimed the domino who had entered first ; "it seems that you were very dull in my absence, as you have called

in this gentleman to keep you company." This was said in a lively tone by the domino, as he seated himself behind the bat, who seemed very much annoyed. The two gentlemen of the Court remained standing in the rear of the box and exchanged mocking glances.

"Monseigneur," replied Madame de Parabère, with embarrassment, "there is a mistake in all this, and I assure you——"

"Do not assure me of anything, marchioness. Let Dubois do all that. Tell me who this gentleman is."

"I will tell you that myself," replied the young man, drawing himself up haughtily. "My name is Anthony Joseph, Count de Horn, and I belong to a sovereign house."

"So do I, by Heaven!" replied the domino, bursting out into a laugh. "Marchioness, I congratulate you. When you find some one to take my place, you do not let yourself down, at all events; for, if I have not forgotten my genealogy, this gentleman is a relation of mine. Your kindness still confines itself to our family. That is very good, and I must——"

"You have said enough in that mocking tone, sir," interrupted the count; "the Marchioness de Parabère is under my protection, and I shall not allow any one to insult her in my presence."

"I think, sir, that it is you who are under her protection, as I find you in her box," replied the domino, with perfect coolness.

This composure made M. de Horn still more angry, and he rose in a perfect rage. At the same moment the dark, thin nobleman came forward and said in a mocking tone: "Young man, you are no doubt ignorant that it is the Duke of Orleans who does you the honour to address you."

"The devil fly away with you, Camillac!" exclaimed the Regent; "you have such a mania for mentioning my name at every turn that there is no way of keeping up my *incognito* for an instant, and you have spoiled my pleasure for the night."

Count de Horn had made a gesture rather of anger than surprise, on hearing the title of his powerful rival, but did not appear in the least disposed to yield his place to him. There followed an embarrassing silence, especially on the part of Madame de Parabère, who bitterly lamented not having sent her young admirer away before. The Duke of Orleans, still calm, looked curiously at this impetuous scion of an heroic race to which his own was allied, and M. de Horn's boiling audacity did not seem greatly to displease him. "What do you think of all this, Nocé?" said the Marquis de Camillac to the other gentleman of the Court.

"I think that it is a good thing to be young, but that young men are badly brought up in Flanders," curtly replied M. de Nocé.

Count de Horn immediately turned upon the ill-advised courtier who had taken upon himself to teach him a lesson, and the affair was about to take a bad turn when the Regent saw fit to cut the matter short. "Well, sir," said he, addressing the young man, "if, since you came to Paris, you had taken the trouble to wait upon his Majesty or myself, I should make no difficulty about your presence in this box, for your family is one of the first in Europe. But, through your own fault, I do not know you, and you will allow me, in the name of the Marchioness de Parabère, whose box this is, to request you to leave it."

The count turned pale, and was about to grasp the hilt of his sword, when his eyes encountered those of the marchioness, which shone from behind her mask with a supplicating expression. He thereupon contained himself, and went slowly towards the door. "Sir," exclaimed he, "I obey

the marchioness ; but let me tell you, that if one of your ancestors had met one of mine under similar circumstances, he would not have told him to go away."

"Really !" sneered Nocé ; "what would he have said to him ?"

"He would have said : 'Let us both go out,'" replied M. de Horn.

And having thus haughtily defied Nocé, he opened the door of the box and disappeared. The two maskers who had been listening in the pit had watched this scene with lively interest. The end no sooner came than the taller one whispered to his companion : "That cavalier would most decidedly be a good recruit for our party. I must speak to him at once. Stay here, chevalier, and do not stir till I return."

As he spoke he mingled with the crowd, and the other masker once more began to attend to what was going on in the box. The gentlemen there were all laughing heartily. "Who is that madman, monseigneur ?" demanded Camillac.

"Ask the marchioness," replied the regent.

"I protest that I saw the young madcap this evening for the first time," said Madame de Parabère.

"Very well ! very well ! marchioness, you know that I am not jealous. Besides, he is charming, your madcap, a very feather-head. What an air ! what fire ! When I looked at him, just now, I remembered what I was at his age, and I came very near exchanging a few sword-thrusts with him under some street-lamp."

"Would you think of such a thing ?" exclaimed the marchioness.

"Why not ? Some such diversion would have made me feel fifteen years younger, and if that talkative Camillac had not meddled as he did, and called me 'the Regent,' I should have satisfied my whim. But people do not govern the State for their own pleasure," added Philip, with a sigh.

"What ought to console you, monseigneur, is that you have proved your courage in Spain, Italy, and elsewhere."

"Yes ! yes ! those were good old times, and I regret them every day."

"You are not very gallant," said the marchioness. "Is the young man really related to you ?"

"He is ; he is related to my family through my mother, the Princess Palatine. He is a younger son of the house of Horn, which ruled over the Netherlands in the eleventh century. I have been told that he has been here for a month past, and associates with some very bad fellows. It is no hanging matter, but Dubois says that he has evil intentions, and ought to be watched. But, speaking of Dubois, isn't that he who is fluttering about down there in that puce-coloured domino, and making signs of despair to us ?"

Just then in the pit a little man, ridiculously got up in a cape and gown much too large for his slender person, was making his utmost efforts to get through the crowd. "I would wager my marquisate against all the privileges which he has got from you by his tricks, that it is Dubois himself," said Camillac.

"He is the only person who has that stealthy gait," added Nocé. "Just look at him slipping through the maskers like a marten in a poultry-yard."

"What can he want with me ?" muttered the Regent.

He soon found out, for the puce-coloured domino, by dint of bending down and slipping along, succeeded in reaching the box, and, rising on tiptoe, held out at arm's length a folded paper which the marchioness

condescended to take with her pretty fingers and at once handed to the prince. Philip opened it, glanced at it, and shrugged his shoulders as he grumbled out: "It's the same nonsense as ever. He says that an attempt will be made to carry me off to-night, and that I must be on my guard. Call out to him, marchioness, to let me alone and go to the devil."

"He is off already, monseigneur," replied Madame de Parabère. "He is running as fast as he can, and is out of hearing already."

"Luck go with him! Let all this solemn stuff go till to-morrow, and we will try to amuse ourselves a little. What is the matter over there? Some people are jostling one another, and making a good deal of noise. Is our young turkey-cock at his tricks again?"

"Oh, no. Some odd-looking maskers over there are making the disturbance."

"Oho! we must see it," said the duke, advancing and bringing his chair close to that in which Madame de Parabère was seated, and leaning over the side of the box.

A carnival-like procession was coming into the theatre through the crowd. It was made up of four masked men, dressed as apothecaries and doctors, and bearing with laughable gravity a litter upon which there lay a man whose face and form were entirely hidden by a black cloth. They came straight toward the marchioness's box, advancing with measured steps, as was suitable for members of the medical faculty. "These people are going to act a scene from one of Molière's plays," said Camillac. "They look like Monsieur de Pourceaugnac's matachin-dancers."

"The masquerade seems to me to be a gloomy affair," muttered the Regent.

Meantime the four litter bearers set down their burden near the box out of which the Duke of Orleans and Madame de Parabère were leaning. The crowd had opened to allow them to pass, expecting some amusing sight. And now the false doctors and apothecaries began to perform a kind of ceremony around the litter, with gestures suited to their profession, pretending to feel the sick man's pulse and so forth. The public appeared to be greatly amused at this gratuitous performance, but it did not last long. After three or four passes, with accompanying ridiculous gambols, the four maskers darted head foremost into the thickest part of the crowd, and each disappeared in a different direction. The spectators were surprised at this unexpected disappearance, and drew near the litter, calling out to the man who was stretched out upon it, and who persisted in lying still. One of them, bolder than the rest, took hold of his hand, which lay beyond the black cloth, and shaking it roughly, asked him if he would not dance. The sick man did not stir or utter a word. Then the people in the crowd began to look at one another in mingled surprise and fear. "Take away the cloth, my lads!" called out the Regent, who was becoming interested in the little mystery; "uncover that fellow there and shake him well to teach him not to play the dying man at an opera ball."

The crowd were all willing. The black cloth was dragged off, and at the same time a cry of horror went up. On the litter lay a corpse naked to the belt, and with a dagger still sticking in a ghastly wound in the breast. The frightful discovery caused indescribable confusion in the theatre. Those nearest drew back in terror and attempted to fly. Those who were further away, understanding nothing in the others' behaviour, attempted to see what had caused it, and began to push the other way. The result was a regular commotion, which threatened to result in serious

accidents. Women uttered the most lamentable cries ; men shouted and cuffed one another in their attempts to make their way out. The terrible litter caused perfect consternation, and even in the Regent's box all was excitement. The marchioness had raised her delicate hands to her mask so as not to see the frightful sight. Nocé, the refined, voluptuous, careless Nocé, grew perceptibly paler ; Camillac, the sceptical rake, had to sneer to hide his emotion. The Regent alone kept cool and looked quietly on. "By Heaven !" said he, "these are insolent dogs, and Argenson has a strange way of attending to his business as head of the police."

"Monseigneur," ventured Camillac, who never lost a chance to say a spiteful thing, "he has no time to look out for rascals, now that he is so busy doing penance at a certain convent in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine."

"Why nobody knows what he does with himself," added Nocé, trying to look unconcerned, "I read a description of him pasted up on a wall this very day, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Honoré : 'A great black dog has been lost. He has a red collar and black ears. Whoever finds him will receive a reward on bringing him to Madame de—'"

"Stop your foolish jokes, Nocé," said the Duke of Orleans, impatiently ; "it is not fitting to mock beside a corpse, and you would be better employed if you leaped over into the pit, and brought me that paper that is fastened to the handle of the dagger which the murderers have left in the wound."

"What ! my lord," stammered the rake, far from feeling flattered at being sent on such an errand, "you wish me to go—"

"Let us go away, Philip, let us go away in Heaven's name !" said the marchioness.

"No, not before I know the meaning of this villainous enigma," replied the Regent firmly.

"I think we shall learn what it means," cried Camillac, "for here are the soldiers of the guard, with a man who looks like a policeman at their head."

"That is as it should be. Let them do what they have to do, and keep quiet, gentlemen."

Just then a squad of French guardsmen came in and scattered the crowd with the butt ends of their muskets. A man wearing a grey cloak was at their head, carrying a black staff in his hand, which he made use of to deal blows right and left to such maskers as were tardy in getting out of the way.

At the same moment the door of the box was opened with violence, and a domino rushed in like a whirlwind. It was the same puce-coloured domino who, an instant before the entrance of the lugubrious-looking procession, had handed the note to the Regent. "Take care, abbé, you almost upset me," grumbled Camillac.

"Aha ! it is you, Dubois," exclaimed the Regent. "You have come in the nick of time, and you can explain to me the meaning of this corpse which those rascals have had the insolence to set down here beside my box."

"Who cares for that carrion and those who brought it ?" said Dubois, stammering outrageously as usual.

"Dubois, my friend, you are disrespectful."

"Who is thinking of respect ?"

"What are you thinking of, then ? You annoy me with your everlasting preambles."

"Oh, I am worn out !" exclaimed Dubois, throwing back the cape of his domino so hastily that he pushed back his wig. The pointed face of

the famous minister of the Regency then appeared and looked so very odd that, in spite of the seriousness of what had occurred, the Duke of Orleans could not help laughing in his face. "Where have you come from? What has put you in such a flurry?" he asked.

"Where have I come from? Did you read my note? I have been attending to what the head of your police thinks beneath him. I have been spying, and detecting in the very act, the men who were making ready to carry you off as you left the ball. They were going to throw you into a carriage and take you off as fast as they could carry you to the dominions of your good cousin the King of Spain, who has prepared for you the same tower in which Francis the First was once imprisoned."

"What stuff! That is Cellamare's plot over again. You are crazy, Dubois, you are crazy, and if that is all you have to tell me it is not worth getting into such a fume about and knocking off your wig."

"I am crazy, am I?" cried Dubois. "This is the way you receive me, then, when I have saved your liberty and perhaps your life? Ask the police officer who came with me, and whom I shall presently bring to you—ask him if I was crazy just now, when I heard Colonel La Jonquière, the man who missed you by a quarter of an hour two years ago in the Bois de Boulogne, say—"

"What! is that man in Paris?"

"More than that, he is in the theatre with half a dozen cut-throats in the pay of that damnable one-handed man, Count de Schlieben, the secret agent of Alberoni."

"Oho!" said the Regent, rising, "I will show these people that they cannot with impunity lay their hands upon a prince of the house of France. Lend me your sword, Nocé, and you, Camillac, call up the soldiers of the guard and let us place ourselves at their head and charge upon this mob."

"Charge!" repeated Dubois, with a mocking glance. "Who the devil do you wish to charge at? Do you think that La Jonquière and his bullies will be such fools as to stand in a row and wait for you to come up? Not at all! not at all! they are scattered about in the crowd, and they hope to be able to seize you in the midst of some disturbance. The best thing you can do is to make off as fast as you can and go home by the little door which leads to the rooms of the Palais Royal, at the end of this building."

"Come, monseigneur; come, I beg of you," said Madame de Parabère, in a low tone.

"Not before I speak with the police agent," replied the Regent. "Call him, Dubois."

"We are losing precious time, but as you insist upon it, come here, Larfaillé," called out the minister, going to the front of the box.

The man who answered to the plebeian name of Larfaillé was the individual in grey who had brought in the guard. He had just removed the dagger from the breast of the dead man, about whom the soldiers had made a circle, and he was attentively examining the paper tied to the handle of the weapon. "Give me that paper," said Dubois to him.

The officer looked up. He was very pale, and his eyes glittered. When he recognised the minister, he rapidly came forward with the paper, which he held out to him. "Read for yourself, monseigneur," said Dubois, with his usual stutter, "but make haste, for the crowd is coming up, and in it there are men who have watched all your motions."

The Duke of Orleans took hold of the bloody paper, not without undisguised repugnance, and, in a low tone, read as follows: "Here lies Firmin Desgrais, a spy and the son of a spy, killed for having meddled with what did not concern him. Thus may all perish who paid him for spying: to wit, Philip, the tyrant, Dubois, the varlet, and Law, the thief." Beneath this anathema was written in large letters, the words: "NUMBER ONE."

"The devil!" quoth the Regent; "it seems that this is only the beginning of a series. Take care, Dubois, you may be number two."

"My lord, your name is written before mine," growled the minister.

"Very good! but under pretence of exterminating me and poor Law the subjects of his Majesty must not be assassinated. The wretches who have stabbed this poor fellow must be discovered at once and punished as they deserve."

"They shall be, my lord, or I will lose my character," replied a voice, from the front of the box.

The duke leaned forward and saw the man in the grey cloak. "Who are you?" he asked, abruptly.

"My name is Larfaille, and I am only an humble officer of police; but Firmin Desgrais, whom they have killed, was my friend, and I swear before Heaven that those who have assassinated him shall die upon the wheel on the Place de Grève."

"I promise you that I shall not pardon them, and here is something to help you to find them," said the Regent, tossing a purse full of gold to the speaker.

Meantime Dubois had already opened the door of the box, and glanced rapidly up and down the lobby.

"The road is free," said he; "let us take advantage of it."

"I think that you had better make haste, monseigneur," said Nocé, in a low tone.

"To stay here would be simply bravado," added Camillac, gravely.

"Let us begone, then, gentlemen, as you wish it so," said Philip of Orleans, giving a last glance at the theatre, as though he wished to defy his invisible enemies in the crowd—"let us go, but I greatly regret losing a chance to make my way through that mob, sword in hand. I have had no such good luck since the battle of Turin, in September, 1706: to meet with a like chance in the very midst of the opera-ball, and not to take advantage of it, is what I shall never console myself for—unless you help me to forget my ill-luck, marchioness," added he, in a whisper, as he laughingly gave his hand to Madame de Parabère to help her to leave the box.

II.

THE two dominoes, who had been in the pit when the first of the above-described scenes occurred, were not there when the second one took place. The taller of them had left his post as soon as the Count de Horn had departed, and had at once begun to search in the crowd for the new enemy whom chance had made for the Regent. The other, whom his companion called the "chevalier," had acquitted himself conscientiously of his functions as a listener up to the moment when the maskers, disguised as doctors and apothecaries, had made their appearance. But whether he had recognised these lugubrious mummers, or simply wished to avoid the crowd, at all events as soon as these strange revellers had deposited

their litter beneath the Regent's box, and begun their capers, the chevalier had prudently disappeared. Meantime the young count, after his angry outburst, had betaken himself to the vestibule of the theatre, and was walking about there with a look of rage on his face. There was no one near save some servants waiting for their masters, and he was able to give free vent to his anger without fear of being remarked by persons of quality. He strode up and down this neutral ground, sometimes putting his hand to his hat to keep it on his head, sometimes tugging at the hilt of his sword to find out if the weapon came easily from its scabbard. Fire darted from his eyes, and he swore at his ease all alone. "The coward will not come!" said he, between his teeth; "he would rather stay there in his box, laughing at me with his stupid courtiers, and—who knows?—perhaps with the marchioness. By Our Lady of Liège, if I thought that, I——"

"What would you do?" at that moment said a voice at his ear.

M. de Horn at first started back as though he had trodden upon a serpent, and then turned round impetuously. He saw standing before him a tall, massively-built man, clad in a black domino. "What do you want with me?" he demanded, in a tone such as might have made the fiend himself retreat underground.

"Nothing but good," replied the mysterious domino, unflinchingly.

"I do not expect that from any one. Who are you?"

"A friend."

"I have no friends, and I wish for none. Go your way!"

In spite of this order the stranger did not stir. Horn looked angrily at him, shrugged his shoulders, and turned his back. "Two words more, count," resumed the personage in the domino. Hearing himself addressed by his title, the young man stopped in surprise. "You know me, it appears," said he, curtly.

"As well as I know the man who just now insulted you."

Horn looked at the mysterious masker, and replied: "I understand. You overheard my quarrel with the Duke of Orleans, you caught my name by chance, and you wish to profit by this occasion to become acquainted with a nobleman like myself. No use, my good fellow! I do not require your services, and I do not like any interference in my quarrels."

"I have had the honour of being acquainted with you for a long time. You were eight years old when I saw you for the first time, and that must have been thirteen or fourteen years ago, for it was in June, 1706."

"Where did you see me then, if you please?"

"At Brussels, at the bedside of Prince Philip Emmanuel, who had been taken from the field of battle at Ramillies, with seven wounds in his body."

"My father!"

"I fought beside him in the army of Marshal de Villeroy, and, like him, I was captured by the Imperialists."

The young count started, hesitated an instant between the anger which urged him to break off the conversation and the sympathy aroused by this recollection, and ended by saying, almost politely: "What is your name, sir?"

"I will tell you presently, if you will follow me," replied the imper-
turbable individual.

"Follow you? Where?"

"To a place where we shall be free from spies."

“I am not afraid of spies.”

“You are wrong. This place is full of them, for you were pointed out to them on the day when you arrived in Paris, when you went to lodge at the Hôtel de Flandre in the Rue Dauphine.”

“You know where I live, it seems.”

“I know all, and even something *more than all.*”

Horn appeared to hesitate, but after a moment he exclaimed, stamping his foot: “No, I am determined that I will not stir from here till——”

“Till Philip of Orleans passes, I suppose?”

“Yes. Why should I deny it? He has seriously offended me, and refused to give me satisfaction. I will force him to do so, and I am waiting for him to insult him in such a manner as shall compel him to draw his sword, if he have a drop of blood left in his veins.”

“And he has, young man, he has, I'll answer for that, for I have seen him under fire more than once; but you will wait here for him in vain. He is now gaily supping in his private apartments at the Palais Royal with his gay companions, and Madame de——”

“That is not true,” interrupted the count, perhaps to avoid hearing the name of the marchioness; “I left him in that box, I found out that his carriage was waiting near by, and as I have not stirred from this vestibule——”

“It is easy to see, count,” interrupted the stranger, “that you have just come to Paris. You do not know that the opera house communicates by a secret door with the Palais Royal. The Regent has left that way.”

“May lightning blast him, and me too, for being tricked like this!” cried young Horn, stamping with rage.

“Calm yourself, count, calm yourself! Anger is a bad adviser, and war cannot well be waged by a man in a rage.”

“War? How can I make war upon this man who is more powerful than the King of France? I have lost the opportunity for revenge, and it will not return.”

The domino, departing from his statue-like immobility, stepped forward, laid his hand upon Horn's shoulder and, looking at him with eyes that shone like live coals through his mask, exclaimed: “You speak of revenge—do you really wish to be revenged upon the Regent?”

“Do you doubt it? I would give my life to have him here for five minutes alone.”

“Your life is precious and you should not hold it so cheap. I can give you the revenge you desire, much less dearly.”

“I accept. What are your conditions?”

“I have but one, and have already told you what it is: it is to go hence with me to a certain lodging where we shall be at our ease and able to form a better acquaintance.”

“Well, sir,” said the count, after a moment's pause, “any other in my place would mistrust you, but you have spoken of my father and you appear to be a gentleman. If you give me your word that the Duke of Orleans is not in the theatre, I am ready to follow you.”

“I swear upon my honour that he did not remain in his box more than a quarter of an hour after you left it. I should not object to going back into the theatre with you so that you might see for yourself, but something has taken place inside which makes it very dangerous for both you and me.”

“What is that?”

“I have not time to explain it here. Let it suffice for me to say that

the spies of the police are buzzing about in every corner of the theatre at this moment ; that the watch is on foot and will soon be set at every exit ; in a word we have scarcely time to reach the street if we do not wish to run into a trap, which would be utterly disastrous to your plans for revenge. Hark ! do you hear ? That is the guard closing the exits."

At that moment a sound of hurried footsteps and of muskets striking upon flagstones came from the top of the marble staircase. Numerous lackeys appeared, driven down into the vestibule by the soldiers. "Come, let us be off," said the count, at once, and then pushing open a swinging door he left the theatre.

The domino, who had closely followed him, took his arm and drew him quickly towards the Rue Saint-Honoré. Horn allowed himself to be led on, and found out from the way in which his companion clutched his arm that his strength was formidable. When they had reached the corner of a little street called the Rue Pierre-Lescot, the stranger let go his hold and quietly began to raise his domino, which he tied around his waist, saying :

"We have a full half hour to walk, and I am taking my precautions in case of any unlucky encounter."

By the smoky light of one of the street lanterns which M. de la Reynie, head of the police under the previous reign, had bestowed upon Paris, Horn saw that his companion was booted and spurred and armed with a long rapier. This would have startled the young count under any other circumstances, and he would, perhaps, have thought twice before running the risk of going about the streets with an armed Hercules. But he already thought that he was dealing with some *reiter* dismissed from service, and conspiring so as to keep himself in good practice, and his heart was so full of resentment that nothing in the world would have kept him from following his adventure to the end. "Where are we going ?" he asked, curtly.

"To the Quartier Saint-Martin," was the laconic reply of his companion, as he walked rapidly up the Rue Saint-Honoré. Horn followed him, without asking more.

There was a sharp frost, and the hardened snow crackled under their feet. This sound was all that broke the silence of the sleeping city as they went on, for neither spoke. The count was thinking of Madame de Parabère and his revenge. The masker had other cares upon his mind, and particularly that of not losing himself in the badly-lighted crooked streets. He seemed to know his way, however, and after passing the cemetery of the Innocents he turned to the left, then to the right, and resolutely entered a blind alley where three persons could scarcely have passed abreast. Finally, he stopped before a wall, saying : "Here we are, count."

"Are you making game of me, sir ?" said Horn.

"Heaven forbid !" replied the domino, without appearing disturbed.

"Was it to bring me into this filthy lane that you made me leave the opera ball ?"

"What do you mean by filthy lane ? We are in the most brilliant and most frequented part of Paris. The Rue Quincampoix is only two steps off on the other side of this wall, that street where millions grow between the paving-stones like grass in the Place Royale."

"Never mind those millions, sir ; I wish to be revenged upon the Duke of Orleans. You promised to show me the way if I consented to follow

you. I have followed you ; it is your place to keep your word. If you do not I will show you that I am not to be fooled with impunity." While talking in this threatening strain Horn had stepped back a few paces, as though to give himself room for putting himself on guard.

"Count, you are rather too ready with your sword ; but I do not consider that to be a fault," said the stranger, gravely. "On the contrary, I like to see young men hasty and touchy, but you must hear people out before running them through."

"You talk too much, sir ! Where have you brought me ?"

"Where I promised to bring you ; to the door of a house where some friends are waiting for me—friends who hate the Regent, and who are better able to harm him than you are."

"Then let me see the door and go in."

"The door will be opened, and you shall go in, when you take the oath which I require."

"An oath, from me !"

"Yes, count. You must swear, upon your word of honour as a gentleman, that you will never reveal to any one—let what may happen—what you see or hear in this house."

"What do you mean by 'Let what may happen ?' If there be anything of a disgraceful nature contemplated, I—"

"I mean that we may not agree, after I have frankly informed you of the aim I am pursuing. I am conspiring against the Regent—that you must have guessed—but every one conspires as pleases himself ; my way, and that of my companions, may not suit you. In that case, nothing need be done by us conjointly. You will be free to go as you came—but I wish to be able to rely upon your absolute discretion."

"Upon my word, sir, you have a pretty way of talking ! Where did you ever hear that a gentleman like myself would stoop to denounce people whom he had honoured by a visit, even though they might be the greatest rascals in the world ?"

"You give me your word, then ?" insisted the domino, quite insensible to this display of lofty sentiments.

"I do."

"Enough, count ; follow me !" and the masked man now applied his right hand to one of the projecting stones in the wall—a stone which yielded at once, and revealed an opening scarcely wide enough to allow a man to pass through it. Horn, in the darkness, could not understand how it was that the wall had opened. He simply saw that the apparent masonry was but a semblance, skilfully arranged to hide a secret door. Any one else in his place would, no doubt, have hesitated to pass through, for only unknown, dangerous, and alarming mysteries could await him on the other side ; but his temperament allowed him to hesitate but seldom, and he never shrank from danger. The young madcap cast a rapid glance about him, and saw nothing suspicious. The lane was deserted, and no sound was heard but the monotonous grating of a swinging sign. The domino was already on the other side of the wall and was beckoning to him. Horn went in, and the door closed behind him. He then saw that he was in a garden, or rather enclosure, in which tall trees were growing. On his left there was a house, the windows of which were carefully closed. Only a few rays of light were visible. "Give me your hand and come with me," said the masker, in a low tone. "They are waiting for us."

"For you, you mean," grumbled the young man, "for I have not

been in the habit of frequenting this place, which looks like a den of thieves."

"Oh ! count, if my friend Blanche-Barbe * heard you talk about his house in that way he would be greatly grieved. A den of thieves, this noble inn of the Epée de Bois, which overlooks the Rue Quincampoix and the Allée de Venise ! A den of thieves, this celebrated tavern where such good Hermitage is to be drunk on the ground floor, and where millions in bank-notes change hands on the floor above ! Blanche-Barbe would suffocate with rage, and Dame Margot, his worthy spouse, would die of shame, and if you but knew their charming daughter, you——"

"Enough, sir !" interrupted Horn, "I did not come here to hear you sound the praises of Blanche-Barbe and his family. Tell me at once what you have to propose to me, or else——"

"Patience, count ! just give me time to take you up stairs to a retired room where we can talk at our ease."

Then the stranger, taking Horn by the arm, led him rapidly across the garden and up a wooden stairway outside the house. The young nobleman submitted to be led, taking care, however, to keep his right hand on the hilt of his sword. His guide, after going about thirty steps, along the wooden balcony, stopped before a low door, and gave three knocks at various intervals.

The songs and laughter heard within at once ceased : a heavy step caused the planks to creak, a key grated in the lock, the door turned upon its hinges, and a strange face appeared. It was that of a tall, lanky fellow, as bony as an old cab horse, and tricked out with an enormous black wig. He was fondly hugging a gigantic pitcher to his breast. "Ah ! is it you, colonel ?" cried this odd-looking personage ; "we are all here, except our dear chevalier, but he spends so much time in gazing at the stars and sighing after unknown divinities that he is always behind time."

"The chevalier is at his post. I told him to attend to a commission. Hold your tongue, and let this gentleman and me come in."

"Aha ! so you have a recruit ? Who is this gentleman ?"

"You shall hear by-and-bye. Come in, count !"

Horn followed the man in the domino, and entered a square room, where three other individuals, dressed like the one who had opened the door, were drinking at a table covered with bottles. The strange party seemed to have attended some masquerade, and had not even taken time to remove the garments in which they had arrayed themselves for some gay nocturnal expedition. Their gowns all were stained with wine, their ruffles were crumpled, their bands torn, their wigs awry or thrown off amidst broken glasses and empty flagons. "Well, sir," exclaimed the count at this sight, "I warn you that I am in no mood for laughter, and you must explain the meaning of this ridiculous pasquinade or else give me satisfaction for your unseemly conduct."

"This is no pasquinade, I assure you," said the domino calmly. "These gentlemen, like ourselves, have been to the opera ball, and, if you had not left the Duke of Orleans' box so soon you would have seen that they have been fulfilling a very serious task."

"What task ? Explain yourself more clearly, or you shall repent having made game of me."

"There is no such intention ; these gentlemen, who do me the honour

* A nickname, literally meaning "White-Beard."

of conspiring with me against the Regent, are sword-wearing men, and if they appear in an odd garb to-night it is only by my orders, and for serious reasons."

"It seems, colonel, that you saw us play our little farce!" said the tall thin man, with a smile that was like a grimace. "May I ask what you thought of it?"

"I think that it was a blunder."

"I don't agree with you, colonel, I assure you my stratagem——"

"You shall demonstrate its merits some other time. At present, confine yourself to drinking Master Blanche-Barbe's Hermitage, and as soon as our friend the chevalier appears, let me know. I am going to talk with this gentleman in the other room." As he spoke thus in a tone that admitted of no reply, the masker crossed the room, opened the door, and with a courteous gesture invited Horn to go in before him. The young nobleman had made up his mind to try the adventure, and it was indeed now too late to draw back. He was alone in an unknown place, and there were already five men there who, to judge by their language and their appearance, had fewer scruples than offensive and defensive weapons. He, therefore, surmounted the repugnance which he felt at remaining any longer in such company, and went without hesitation into the room of which the masker did him the honours. This room, which was smaller than the first, was also better furnished. There were four arm-chairs covered with a handsome silken fabric, an ebony table inlaid with brass work, and two large chests carefully padlocked, and well fitted as receptacles for dangerous documents. A lamp suspended from the ceiling cast a soft light upon this retreat, reserved for the exclusive use of the man who appeared to be the head of the band. While Horn was examining the objects around him with some surprise, his companion made haste to take off his domino, and appeared clad in a tight green coat, laced with silver, a richly embroidered vest, and poppy-coloured breeches; his boots reached to his knees, and round his waist there was a broad belt of light leather, which sustained a long and solid sword with a hilt of steel. This attire savoured of both the Court and the camp, but the face which the stranger displayed on unmasking himself was essentially military. His brow, furrowed by deep wrinkles, his heavy black eyebrows, his curved nose, his wide mouth with thick lips, his square chin, prominent cheek-bones, tanned complexion, and, above all, his hard and piercing eyes, all made up a striking presentment which told of ungovernable hardihood, invincible tenacity, the daily habit of command, and absolute contempt for danger. Such a man would give orders to strangle a prisoner or to mount to the assault of a bastion with the same cold, implacable resolution. The count looked at him with curiosity mingled with some little anxiety, for the stranger's sombre physiognomy promised nothing good; and he waited till he should speak, like a duellist who prudently remains on the defensive awaiting the first thrust of his adversary. "I must, first of all, make my excuses to you, count," said the personage before him with a courteous bow.

"Excuses?" said Horn, somewhat surprised by this opening.

"Yes, indeed! Necessity obliged me to put you to the trouble of taking a very disagreeable walk through the mud of Paris, it is only here that I can talk freely with you; and the great desire which I felt for the honour of your acquaintance must plead my excuse."

"This is certainly very flattering to me, but—"

"But you would like to know to whom you are speaking. The time has come for telling you, count. I am Colonel La Jonquière."

"What! he who—"

"Yes, count; he who, in the autumn of 1718, came so near carrying off Philip of Orleans, and who is disposed to make another effort to rid France of that man."

Horn made no haste to reply. He looked steadfastly at the celebrated partisan chief before him, one whose daring attempt had made so great a stir through Europe, and he endeavoured to recall the somewhat confused recollections of it which had been lingering in his mind for more than a year. "You are surprised to see me at liberty, are you not?" said the adventurer, smiling.

"I am, indeed. I was told—"

"That I was in the Bastille?"

"Yes."

"You were not misinformed. I was there three months ago; and I assure you that it is a very disagreeable place to be in."

"But has the Regent pardoned you?"

"Oh, no! I came out without his permission, in the teeth of his jailers, and at the risk of my life. I made a hole larger than this table, I sawed through bars thicker than my arm, crossed a moat as deep as the Seine, was fired at by three sentinels, and strangled a police officer whom I found in my way; however, I am none the worse for all that."

"I admire your courage and your good luck, sir, but I also admire you for appearing in Paris after such adventures."

"I have not shown myself. I was masked to-night, and when I go out during the day it is in such a disguise that the most cunning bloodhound of the police force could not detect it. I will soon give you a specimen of my talents in that line, and I venture to bet that you will not recognise me."

"This is really astonishing," said the count, coolly, "but did you not tell me that you had formerly met my father?"

"I have had the honour, count, of knowing all your family. I formerly served with the prince, your father, under Tallard and Villeroi, and, last year, when I fled to Liège, where I was entrapped by a rascally police officer—and before the adventure which caused me to be imprisoned in the Bastille—I was introduced to your elder brother, Prince Maximilian-Emanuel and the princess, your mother, the daughter of the Prince de Ligne."

At the mention of his brother's name the young man had frowned, but he smiled when his mother was spoken of.

"You were then in command of your company at Innspruck, I believe," resumed the colonel; "that is why I had not the pleasure of meeting you; but you can judge now, count, whether I am altogether a stranger."

"No, certainly not," replied Horn, cordially; "when any one speaks to me of my mother he is welcome, for there is not a day that I do not regret having left her, and if it depended upon her alone—"

"Yes, yes, I guess what you would say," interrupted La Jonquière; "I know what it is to be the younger son of a great house, and to find one's-self reduced to a small allowance, while the elder son bears the title and spends the fortune."

The young man blushed, and eagerly exclaimed: "You are mistaken, colonel: I am rich."

"So much the better, faith ; so much the better. That will not injure you with the ladies, and Madame de Parabère must have very bad taste to prefer that squat, fat Philip to you who are young and handsome, as noble as the king, and able to throw away your money, as I am sure you do, like all the rest of your family."

It was not without a motive that La Jonquière thus referred to the Marchioness de Parabère. He wished to bring forward the only subject of interest to him ; the conspiracy in which he wished to inveigle Count de Horn—a valuable auxiliary, indeed, in an enterprise attempted by obscure men—and he knew that the only way to induce Horn to take part in it would be to awaken his hatred of the Regent, his all-powerful rival. He soon saw that he had touched him. "Colonel," said the young count with emotion, "from this moment you may rely upon my friendship." La Jonquière bowed gravely, and awaited the agreeable result of this promising opening. "But will you allow me to remind you," added Horn, "that you promised you would enable me to avenge myself upon the Duke of Orleans for having insulted me to night?"

"What I promise I fulfil, count, and not to lose time in idle talk, I will make a clean breast of it. As you may have found out already, I command a certain number of determined men, and I am only waiting for an occasion of a favourable kind to place myself at their head and act."

"Act, how ? what is your plan ? You do not, I presume, intend to assassinate the Regent ?"

"No, although he has deserved death a hundred times," said La Jonquière, with a somewhat equivocal air. "We shall content ourselves with carrying him off and taking him out of France."

"Oh ! then I will join you. I will gallop beside the carriage that bears him away ; and when once we have crossed the frontier I will force him to get out and take his sword in hand."

"Pardon me, count," said the partisan, scarcely concealing a mocking smile, "but it would be difficult to work matters like that."

"Why ? As soon as he has left the kingdom of which he is regent the duke will be no more than any other gentleman, and he cannot make his grandeur an excuse for refusing to give me satisfaction."

"No ; but I must tell you that he would have no time to cross steel with you or any one else, for he is expected across the frontier."

"Who expects him ?"

"The agents of the King of Spain, who will in all haste take him to some fortress where he will be kept a close prisoner. It is Alberoni's old plan, and that of the Prince of Caraman, which I have taken up on my own account, and hope to bring to a successful issue."

"If that be the case, colonel," said M. de Horn, curtly, "do not rely on me. I hate the Regent ; but the affairs of the King of Spain have nothing to do with mine."

La Jonquière could not restrain a movement of vexation, and gave the young man a look which was not exactly kind ; however, he contained himself and replied with great calmness : "You are your own master, count, and I have no right to judge of your actions. When I was at your age and in love, if I met with any obstacle between me and the woman whom I loved, I had not a moment's peace till I had got rid of that obstacle, let the means be what they might. 'Other days bring other ways.' That is quite natural, of course."

"Colonel," exclaimed M. de Horn, greatly wounded, "I wish to fight

with the Duke of Orleans ; everything else is indifferent to me ; but if you can procure for me the only revenge I seek, I assure you that I will join your enterprise willingly."

"The eyes of the adventurer lit up. "Well, then, count," said he slowly, "I think that I know a way of satisfying you."

"Tell me what it is, and I am at your service," exclaimed M. de Horn.

"I will ; but pardon me for insisting upon this point—I shall be obliged to tell you a secret which is not my own, the secret of our conspiracy. The least indiscretion might cause many heads to fall, and—"

"It seems to me, sir, that my word ought to be enough," replied the count, visibly wounded at the doubt conveyed by this remark.

"Without doubt. I merely spoke to remind you that I have, perhaps, some merit in serving your personal rancour on so serious an occasion. I must tell you that everything is prepared for the abduction. We should perhaps have risked it to-night, but we preferred to wait for a more favourable opportunity. That, we are almost sure, is near at hand, and it is this : The Duke of Orleans, although he pretends to great strength of mind, has always had great belief in the supernatural. I do not know whether he believes in the divinity, but I am sure that he believes in the fiend, and that he even thinks he can call him up and talk with him, for he often confers as to the proper way of doing this with an Italian gentleman who is very learned in necromancy, and who is one of our friends. The said gentleman persuaded him that he could talk with Beelzebub in person if he, Regent of France, was not afraid to go at midnight to a very lonely spot on a certain road."

"Aha ! I begin to understand. Where is this place ?"

"It is a forsaken quarry in the plains of Vanves. I need not tell you that I and my men, who will be informed in time by our Italian, will be on hand at the right moment. Philip will certainly not find Satan ; in lieu thereof he will meet people whom he does not expect to see."

"And do you believe that he will come ?"

"I am sure of it, and for two reasons : the first is, that he is full of this stupid belief in sorcery ; the second, that his minister, Dubois, will not fail to tell him that he will be running a great risk in going about in this way at night ; and Philip is a man who would risk his life a hundred times over rather than allow it to be believed that he is afraid."

"That may be, after all. I believe him to be brave ; and it is upon his bravery that I rely to obtain the reparation which I will have, cost what it may. But I do not see how you can compel him to give it to me."

"It is, however, very easy to guess that. We shall be hidden at the bottom of the quarry—you, I, my two lieutenants, and four or five of my most determined men. The rest will await us at two hundred paces from the spot, on the plain, with a carriage ready to start. As soon as the duke goes into this hole, which has no issue, I shall appear and have him surrounded by my men, and I shall say some such thing as this to him : 'Do not attempt to resist. You would compel me to have recourse to violence, and that is what I wish to avoid. Your life is not threatened, and you have only to take a trip to the fair land of Spain, which you know so well, and of which you like the climate and the ladies. However,' I shall add, 'there is a gentleman here to whom you have given great offence, and if you choose, before getting into the post-chaise, to do him the honour of a sword-thrust, I am quite disposed to give you time to do

so.' Philip will agree to do this, no doubt ; and now, count, allow me to ask you what you think of my plan ?"

"I think that it is very well contrived, colonel," replied Horn, with some hesitation. "It seems to me, as it does to you, extremely likely that the duke will not draw back, but——"

"But what ?"

"What would happen should I kill him ?"

"If you kill him all will be over. We shall not be at the trouble of taking him to Spain, and his death would lead to the triumph of our party."

"That is all very well ; but, as I told you before, your cause is not mine, and I do not wish to be accused of lying in wait and committing murder——"

"For shame, count ! what ugly words, and how badly you use them to express the facts ! In the first place, the duel will be honourable, and besides, no one in France will know what has taken place, as the only witnesses will make haste to leave the kingdom. My men do not even know your name, and will never know it, and neither I nor my two lieutenants, whom we are undoubtedly obliged to place in our confidence, will ever reveal it to any one."

Horn reflected, and seemed greatly perplexed. It was easy to see that he was divided between an ardent desire for an encounter with his rival, and the repugnance which he felt at entering into complicity with conspirators. "Shall we speak now of what would happen in case the duke should be merely wounded, or in case he wounded you ?" resumed the colonel. "In the first case, we should place the Regent in the bottom of the travelling-carriage ; in the second, we would take you to the dwelling of the nearest peasant, and as I have an old army surgeon in my troop, the wounded man, whoever it might be, would be sure of having his wounds attended to at once."

"And if I were killed you would only have to leave me there," added the count, to complete the list of conjectures.

"No," said La Jonquière, at once, "if such a misfortune occurred, I swear to you that you should lie beside your father in the Walloon country, at Bausignies, of which you are sovereign-count, even though, to take your body there, I should have to expose my life and risk the failure of my cause." This protestation of devotion was so warmly delivered that it caused visible emotion in the young man. "Well, then, count, is all agreed ? Are we allies ?" asked the adventurer, in order to profit by the lucky hit which he had made. The reply was not immediate. "I should be happy to count you in our ranks," said the adroit colonel ; "but you are not bound to us yet, and if you have any remaining scruple——"

"It is not that exactly," said Horn, "but I have a doubt."

"Tell me what it is, and I will remove it at once."

"I am wondering—excuse my suspicion—I am wondering as to what use I can be to you, or, to speak more clearly, what interest you can have in wishing me to conspire with you ; for, although I may not act for the King of Spain, I shall, nevertheless, be in the plot."

La Jonquière bit his lip ; he had not expected this question. He replied, however, with great coolness : "I might protest that my aim in this affair is to oblige you, by giving you the chance of fighting with the Regent. In affirming this, I should not exactly speak the truth, although I should not say what would be false, and I do not wish that there should be the least misconception between us. I will not conceal from you that

in the very unlikely event of our projects being discovered, or failing from some cause or other, your participation in our attempt would be our safeguard. No one would hesitate to cut off the heads of obscure officers like myself and my lieutenants, but there would be hesitation in touching the scion of an illustrious house, allied to the Palatine family, and consequently to the Duke of Orléans himself. If anything caused our conspiracy to fail, your mother would ask our pardon as well as yours from the Regent, and he would not dare to refuse her——”

“Colonel, I am afraid that you greatly overrate the influence of my family; but you have spoken with great frankness, and I accept your propositions.”

“That is as it should be!” exclaimed La Jonquière. “I was sure that we should agree. Shake hands, my dear count, and be sure that from this moment I and mine will be devoted to you to the death.”

The young man did not shake hands with the colonel without a certain amount of hesitation. The pride of birth had risen up within him, somewhat late, it is true, but he nevertheless could not help measuring somewhat scornfully the social distance which separated him, the younger son of a princely house, from the cluster of adventurers grouped about him. “I must tell you frankly, colonel,” said he, lowering his voice, “that however much I may like to be associated with you who were a companion in arms of my father, I do not like being associated with people whose language and manners are repugnant to me——”

“Good!” exclaimed La Jonquière; “you allude to the gay fellows who are emptying those bottles in the next room? Do not mind them. You will not find them in your way, except one whom I shall ask permission to introduce to you presently.”

“Is it the long, lanky fellow who opened the door for us?”

“It is. I confess that he is not of good appearance, but he is brave beyond measure; besides, he is a captain on half-pay in a German regiment, and is of a noble Piedmontese family. We call him familiarly La Valeur,* but his true name is Mille. He is the Cavaliere Lorenzo de Mille, as they say on the other side of the Alps. When you know him, count, you will see that he is a frank, honest, and brave fellow.”

“I prefer to take your word for it, colonel, and you must——”

“That is not all. Laurent de Mille, called La Valeur, has great qualities, but he does not stand so high as my first lieutenant—Chevalier Louis du Terne de Grandpré—a gentleman of the highest nobility of Hainault, and almost a countryman of yours——”

“I have heard of him before.”

“I was sure of that; and you shall judge for yourself of the merits of the man who bears the name, for I think that I hear his voice.”

In point of fact, the sound of an animated conversation in the adjoining room now reached the ears of Horn. The door almost immediately opened, and the tall, ill-made man appeared. “The chevalier has just come, colonel,” said he, in a tipsy voice.

“Tell him to step in,” called out La Jonquière, “and be less noisy over your wine. You are making such a disturbance that the watch might enter the garden without being heard.”

“Oh, no, colonel!” growled the swaggerer; “I may chat, but I have always one ear on the alert, and never sleep with both eyes closed.”

* A nickname signifying “Courage.”

As he spoke he stood aside to allow the new-comer to pass in. This personage was clad in a black domino, the cape of which was turned down over his shoulders. His face was delicate and intelligent, lit up by large blue eyes of infinite sweetness, and, despite his ample masquerading attire, it was evident that his figure was one of great symmetry and elegance. The count felt attracted towards him at once. "Come, my dear Du Terne," called out La Jonquière; "come, let me introduce you to Count de Horn, who has consented to join us."

Du Terne bowed with the grace of a gentleman who is not embarrassed by the presence of a man of higher rank than himself, and said, courteously: "Count de Horn does us great honour, especially as regards myself, who am from Flanders, where the name of Horn is among the most illustrious."

"I have already heard your own, sir," the young count replied, "and I esteem myself fortunate in meeting a gentleman who bears it so well."

Du Terne did not appear to be more than two or three years older than Horn, who was scarcely twenty-two. At that age and between men of the same social caste sympathy is soon established. In less than a minute the count felt better acquainted with the chevalier than with La Jonquière, with whom he had spent several hours. "I will tell you in a few words," said the colonel, "how matters stand. The count was seriously insulted by the Regent at the opera ball, and not being able to call him out and fight a duel with him, he trusts to us to furnish him with a chance for an encounter. I have promised that one of these evenings he shall have such a chance at the Vanves quarries. Do you understand?"

"Exactly. May it soon occur, and may the count chastise the man who takes advantage of his rank as a prince to insult a gentleman!"

"You have been injured by him, also, then?" said Horn eagerly.

Du Terne blushed, and was about to reply when the colonel spoke up: "While we wait for the moment of our revenge, one and all, my dear chevalier, I count upon you to do the honours of Paris to Count de Horn. He has just arrived here. It is important to communicate constantly with him, as the moment for action may come unexpectedly, and, as you know, I have to watch over our men, besides a thousand other anxieties. That long-legged Mille is a ready fellow, but no courtier, and his society may not be at all agreeable to the count, but you, chevalier——"

"I shall be delighted to be the companion of M. du Terne de Grandpré," said young Horn with very sincere eagerness. The person and manners of his new acquaintance charmed him, and, besides, he hoped that he would not be obliged to see much of the colonel and the rest of his band.

"Then all is well," said La Jonquière, "and if you will allow it, my dear count, the chevalier will enter upon his functions at once. It is late, and I have only just time to send each of my men to his post and put on a costume suited to the work I have on hand for to-morrow. My friend Du Terne has only to lay aside his domino, and will initiate you into the mysteries of the house kept by our old comrade, Blanche-Barbe, and then I shall rely upon you, gentlemen, to make use of your time as is suitable to your age. Ah! I did not think it was so late—see! it is daybreak! Listen," added he, after a pause. The sound of a bell ringing a loud peal was heard in the distance, and the noise of a confused stir came from without.

"What does that mean," asked Horn, rising.

"It is the bell at the entrance of the Rue Quincampoix, announcing the opening of the 'market of millions,'" said the colonel. "It is eight

o'clock, and we must separate. But, now I think of it, chevalier, show the count the 'gold fair.' I will venture to say that he has not been there, and it is a sight that is well worth sitting up late to see."

"I have long wished to see it," said Horn, "and I could not have a better opportunity or a more agreeable guide."

"I am at your orders, count," replied Terne, taking off his domino. He now appeared clad in an elegant morning suit, the dark colour of which showed his slim figure and easy bearing to great advantage. He completed his toilet by taking from one of the chests in the room a broad hat trimmed with Spanish plait, and a slender court sword with a hilt ornamented with brass niello-work.

Horn looked at him with some surprise, and thought to himself that his new friends certainly took great precautions, as they kept a wardrobe ready in this way for hasty use. He soon saw that their store of costumes was much more complete than he had supposed, for, in crossing the next room with Terne he found that the wine-bibbers were now completely transformed, some as soldiers, some as lawyers' clerks, and some as plain citizens. The Piedmontese Cavaliere Lorenzo de Mille, was dressed as a priest, or, rather, abbé, of terribly reckless demeanour and very aggressive countenance. Wigs, gowns, and the other accessories of masquerading attire had all disappeared. These people were evidently all ready to distribute themselves about Paris to work separately for the common cause, and it looked as though their great chief, Colonel La Jonquière, was about to do the same. The count suffered himself to be led away by his amiable companion, who went up to the woodwork on one side of the room, touched a spring, and moved a panel which disclosed a winding staircase. This narrow and difficult route brought the two young men to a large hall on the ground floor, and Horn found, not without surprise, that it was really daylight. The time had passed quickly, and he had not known how quickly, in the closed rooms on the first floor; and the somewhat dull rays of a wintry sun now came in through the small lozenge-shaped holes in the large shutters of the windows of the inn. It was an inn where he found himself, and nothing more, but kept with a cleanliness which reminded Horn of the taverns in Flanders. The carefully polished metal goblets shone like silver, and the oaken tables, blackened by use, had the appearance of ebony, so brightly were they rubbed up by some diligent hand. Behind a counter laden with jugs and flagons of all sizes was a fat woman of forty, whose red face and full shoulders would have tempted Rubens, the painter of Flemish *kermesses*. Her worthy spouse, the owner of the inn, sat in an embrasure of the open door near the street, and was silently smoking his pipe while he awaited his customers. He did not turn at the sound of the footsteps of the two visitors, descending from above, but his wife made haste to call out: "Pierre! Pierre! come, here is the chevalier!"

At the same time she looked with singular fixity at the young count whom his companion had brought up to the bar, and who seemed somewhat embarrassed. "Dame Margot," said Terne, in a low tone, "here is a gentleman who is one of my friends."

"How long have you known him?" asked the tavern-keeper's wife, with a look of astonishment.

"I made his acquaintance to-night," replied the chevalier, "and I must bid you and Master Blanche-Barbe assist him in case of need; let him pass when he will up and down the secret staircase, and—"

Terne did not finish what he was saying, for the innkeeper suddenly intercepted his sight of Dame Margot by planting his bulky form before the counter. To the great surprise of the chevalier, Master Pierre's usually calm countenance betrayed violent emotion. He looked at the young count with flaming eyes, and—a sign of unmistakable emotion—he had actually removed his pipe from his mouth. At the same time his lips moved without a sound coming from them, and he advanced a step, then drew back, and set his back against the counter as though he was afraid of falling to the floor under the shock of a great surprise. The chevalier was tempted to laugh at him, and the count to be angry; but Master Pierre finally laid his hand upon the latter's shoulder, and said to him in a hollow tone: "Confess that you are of the blood of the Horns."

At this most unlooked-for speech, the count drew himself up quickly to shake off the innkeeper, and said with a haughty air: "What of it, if I am?"

Curt as was the reply, it was evident that the young nobleman was controlling himself with a great effort to keep back a much harsher answer. The wish to avoid annoying his new friend, Chevalier du Terne, induced him to do this, more than any fear of compromising himself by an outbreak. It might be, too, that the imposing countenance of the innkeeper also had some quieting effects. Master Pierre did not owe his strange name of "White-beard" to a physical peculiarity, for his chin was completely shorn, and, besides, as his hair had hardly yet begun to turn grey, it is likely that even had he suffered his beard to grow he would not have borne any resemblance to a patriarch made white by age and wisdom. Although he was nearly fifty he was as straight as a reed, as firm on his long legs as a rock, and his clear, piercing eyes seemed able to read one's very soul. His general appearance was that of a soldier with a rough and sorrowful face, but his intelligent and questioning eyes were not such as one would have expected to find under the shaggy eyebrows of a mere innkeeper. "Will you tell me," resumed the count, angrily, "why you allow yourself to question me and to utter my name, or must I cut off your ears to teach you to speak?"

"That would hardly be worth while, my gentleman, and it would be dangerous for your lordship," replied Blanche-Barbe, with undisturbed gravity. "I am master here, and nothing is ever cut off without my permission. For that reason I do not mind your threats, but I am willing to answer you. I asked you, just now, if you belonged to the house of Horn, because I was struck by your resemblance to the head of that house, whom I formerly saw in the Netherlands. Now I ask no more; I am sure that you do. There is no one like a member of that family for getting into a rage about nothing as you did this moment." As he spoke, Master Pierre put his pipe between his teeth, and, turning his back unceremoniously upon the two young men, he directed himself with measured steps towards the end of the hall.

Exasperated by the fellow's scornful reply, as he considered it, M. de Horn would certainly have given way to his anger had not Terne held him back by saying in his ear, by way of advice: "For Heaven's sake, count, do not forget where we are."

Horn made an angry motion, and said, aloud: "You are right, chevalier. I cannot quarrel with an innkeeper. Let us go hence at once."

The chevalier did not wait for him to speak twice. He dragged his young companion into the street, not, however, without a friendly nod to

Dame Margot, who had looked on with evident emotion during the conversation between Master Pierre and the count, but had abstained from taking any part in it. Terne, like a prudent man, made haste to take Horn as far from the inn as would deprive him of all desire to return to it. The Rue Quincampoix, which the count now entered for the first time in his life, was beginning to fill with people, although the bell which announced the opening of the “open air exehange” had scarcely ceased to sound. By a rare chance, this celebrated street which witnessed so many strange scenes in former times has escaped the pick-axe of the “street improvers.” It is but little changed in appearance since its days of glory, for it is as long, as narrow, and composed of houses as black-looking as ever. But there is less noise there now, for the throng of brokers that filled it in 1720 has gone elsewhere. Feverish ardour then pervaded the narrow thoroughfare, and Mississippi stock was cried at a rise of a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand livres, as the case might be. The lords of finance occupied a reserved corner at the end of the street, not very far from the offices of the India Company; the starving speculators glided timidly along, close to the walls, in quest of some stockholder disposed to give up something payable in the evening only, after the closing of the street; and there were bold and meagre brokers, nudging and elbowing one another, and telling how land in Louisiana sold, together with some duke and peer who was demeaning himself by brokerage, or some farmer-general playing with the public money and paying it away for a pile of paper signed by Law. There, too, were the clerks operating for Fargès, the great broker, the king of the Rue Quincampoix, who dealt in millions only, and died in the straw somewhat late in life, after having had difficulties with the law, in which he resembled other financiers who ended in the same way, and whose rise and fall was in our own time.

The spot favoured by the deceitful goddess Fortune showed so animated and striking a picture that morning that the count soon forgot, if not his grudge against the Regent, at all events his dispute with Master Pierre. He stared with all his might and listened with all his ears, like some raw countryman just come to the great city, and M. du Terne, who initiated him, did so conscientiously. “See, count,” said he to his new friend, “see that fine fellow with gold lace all over him, and with diamond buckles decorating the shoes upon his flat feet. Last week he was the lackey of a dealer in salt, and was glad when Dame Margot would give him credit for a bottle of wine at the inn of the Epée de Bois, from which we have just come.”

“This is truly wonderful,” muttered Horn. “Who are those people who seem to be bowing down before him, and who hold out papers to him as though they were handing a petition to a Prime Minister?”

“They nearly all belong to the tribe of Israel, and, with better discretion than the rest of these madmen, they confine themselves to selling Mississippi stock and making a small profit on it. They are brokers who do not risk anything, but make money. There is the richest of them all, old Father Abraham.”

“What! that ragged old man who looks like a beggar?”

“Oh! you must not rely upon appearances here. Abraham always has his pockets full of stock—to bearer—for several hundreds of thousands of livres, and I will wager that his coffers overflow with golden louis. He is one of Master Pierre’s best customers, and hires a private room over his

tavern, which is very conveniently situated for concluding bargains broached during the day. The money which is spread out on the filthy table in that den, and which passes through that Jewish speculator's claws, would give a fever to a poor half-pay officer like your humble servant."

"Or like myself, for you know that I am on half pay also. But is it really true that fortunes may be so rapidly made by this Scotchman's invention? I thought that it was mere jugglery and trickery?"

"You were right. Law's system, stock and bank, will all vanish some day like the mist on the Mississippi river; but, meantime, those who are cunning will grow rich by selling mere scraps of paper to those who are not. It is like the game in which people pass on a bit of wood lighted at one end, saying: 'I have seen it alive, I have seen it dead, and I saw it after it all went out.' The game is lost by the person in whose hand the light goes out, you know, and woe to those who are the last holders of the India Company's paper."

"Yes, yes, I see," muttered the count, the explanation having made him thoughtful; "here, as elsewhere, luck comes to him who proves daring."

"Oho!" exclaimed the chevalier, "do you see that stir at the end of the street? Either I am greatly mistaken, or it is the prince of brokers, the great ruler of the Mississippi scheme, who is deigning to mingle for an instant with his lowly subjects."

"Whom are you speaking of?"

"Of that very illustrious, very opulent, and very powerful lord, John Law—by birth a Scotchman, and by profession a quack. The Parisians laud him to the skies, and will continue doing so until they want to hang him. As they cannot pronounce his name rightly, they generally call him 'Las,'* and even by way of a pun *L'As de cœur*—or the ace of hearts—on account of his success in winning the hearts of women."

"I am glad that he has made his appearance," said the count. "I have always wanted to see him."

"You can do so now. He walks through his domains, so to speak, every week. This potentate comes to his kingdom in the Rue Quincampoix on his way to the office of the India Company, that great building which you can see over there. It is said, though, that he is now getting tired of this ugly street, and that brokerage will soon be carried on in the Place Vendôme."

"Then we must take this opportunity to look at him. Let us place ourselves so that he may pass near us."

"That would be very imprudent," said Terne, lowering his voice. "Law has a piercing eye and an incredible memory. I do not wish him to remark me, for he would not fail to remember me; and, besides, as he is greatly in favour with the Regent, he is always escorted by police officers, with whom I don't desire to find myself face to face."

"As you please, chevalier," replied the young man; "stand back against the wall while I go forward, as I haven't the same reasons for hiding myself."

"Do as you please, count," said Terne, with a sigh; "but don't forget that you belong to us now."

Horn scarcely heard the reply, and allowed the chevalier to draw back prudently, while he joined the front row of those who were looking on.

* The broad Scotch for Law is "Lah," hence the French "Las" and the pun. It should be remembered that this is fact, not fiction.

The announcement of the approach of the great financier had been spread about with astonishing rapidity, and the brokers, who were shouting out the prices of stock, had stopped doing so as though by magic. Those worshippers of the Golden Calf who were at the end of the street where Law had alighted from his coach had at once formed a procession and respectfully followed him. Those who, on the contrary, like the count and the chevalier, found themselves at the other end of the street, had formed a hedge on each side, leaving the middle free for the celebrated innovator, who advanced majestically, with his head high, and carrying under his arm the *pactolus*, represented by a large red leather portfolio, swollen with stock and bank-notes. Law never possessed the wealth of the Rothschilds, but he was the object of congratulation and adulation, such as would make the least dignified broker of the present day blush for himself. His courtiers followed him with the most respectful bows, and came near going down upon their faces in the muddy street. There arose a kind of harmonious supplication from this vile mob, as though all the beggars were offering prayers to the god Plutus; sometimes hands were held out to beg the charity of a promise, and eyes entreated the privilege of a hearing, and these were the eyes and the hands of great ladies; for the memoirs of the time tell that duchesses tried to get in at the house of the illustrious Scotchman by the windows and the chimneys. Law played the part of a god, descending from Olympus into the Rue Quincampoix, as though he had done nothing else all his life. Tall and of fine figure, with an agreeable face and winning expression, he added to these gifts an air of incomparable majesty, tempered by a kindly smile. He was forty-nine years old at the time, yet few among the young lords of the Court could compare with him in symmetry of figure, grace of motion, and fascination of manner. It was only necessary to see him to recognise in him one of those men who exercise a magnetic influence over women, who are mild yet strong, and who subjugate and charm one and all. Horn, who was staring at him, was so struck with his air and carriage that he muttered to himself: "The fellow looks like some great conqueror, and I can very well understand why he is called the 'Ace of Hearts.'"

As he muttered these words, he chanced to glance at the opposite side of the street, and saw an object as interesting as the powerful Comptroller-General of the Finances. This was a very pretty young girl, who was coming towards the procession with a basket of flowers upon her left arm and a bunch of violets in her right hand. Dressed in a short gown of striped calico, with a coquettish straw hat upon her head, and slippers with high heels, she stepped along very lightly, with that gait which the Greeks spoke of as that of "a goddess walking upon a cloud," and indeed she scarcely seemed to touch the pavement with her feet. She might have been compared to the mythological nymph, beneath whose weight the corn in the field did not bend. She came forward thus lightly, with a sprightly air, not in the least timid, nor yet bold, but gay, lively and simple, like some child who had learned at an early age to take care of herself. On the one side was beauty, health, youth, and all the joys of life incarnate in the most ravishing of heaven's creatures. On the other, wealth, power, will, strength, talent that was almost genius, brought together in the imposing man who held in his hand the financial fate of the kingdom. The advantage was not on the side of John Law, who, however prepossessing he might be, was in the decline of life, and laden with heavy cares. From the mild, sad smile that lit up his face on perceiving the presence of the flower-

girl, one might have been tempted to believe that such was his own view of the matter, and that he would willingly have given the honours and fortune of ripe age for the honest love of youth. This idea occurred to Count de Horn, who looked much more at the little flower-girl than at the famous inventor of the great system. He thought her so charming that he turned to point her out to his new friend by a look, and thus express his mute admiration. To his great surprise, the chevalier, whom he thought to see crouching against some wall, was beside him, with his neck outstretched, and his brow contracted. He was looking at the young girl with visible emotion as he thus thrust forth his head among the spectators, at the risk of being seen, in spite of all that he had said about danger. "He really acts as though he were in love with the girl," thought Horn.

Meantime the queen of beauty and the king of finance had met at a couple of paces from the count and his companion. Without disturbing herself about the majestic Mississippi stockbrokers, the young girl simply made Law a pretty curtsey, and with a quick and graceful gesture placed her violets in his buttonhole.

The gallant Scotchman stopped and looked at her exquisite face with an ardent glance. His eyes usually had the power of subduing all hearts. Dubois, and even the Regent, could not sustain his glance without lowering their eyes. The servile crowd about him stood ready to bow down to the flower-girl or laugh in her face, according as it might please their deity to welcome or repulse her. "What is your name, child?" asked Law, in a grave, harmonious voice.

"Violet, my fine gentleman," answered the young girl with a smile, which displayed her pearly teeth.

"The name of your flowers."

"Yes. I was fond of violets when I was a little child, so I was called by their name, and I shall never sell any other blossoms but these." Her basket, in point of fact, was filled entirely with violets.

Law took a bunch of them, inhaled it, and said in a low tone: "If you will bring the rest to the offices of the India Company, where I am going now, I will put a roll of gold pieces in your basket for every bunch of flowers it contains."

"Excuse me, sir, my violets are not worth so much, and I have nothing to do with the India Company," replied the flower-girl at once. And then bounding on one side with a gazelle-like motion she made way for the great financier and his escort to pass.

Law, unaccustomed to be refused, stood for a moment in surprise, but soon recovered, and contented himself with shaking his finger playfully at the coy *grisette*, as he went on. The count remarked, however, that a man beside him said a few words in his ear, to which he replied by a gesture of assent. An instant after he also saw that this person, who had a somewhat mean appearance, left the group beside him and mingled with the crowd, whilst Law pursued his triumphal march towards the office where he was about to hold council. At this moment he felt a tug at his sleeve and heard the chevalier say in an agitated tone: "May I rely upon you to ward off immediate danger?"

"Without doubt you may," replied the count, in the same tone. "I am at your orders, but what danger threatens you?"

"It is not I who am threatened, but some one in whom I am greatly interested," replied Terne, with strange earnestness.

"Good, I understand! It seems to me, chevalier, that you are letting

yourself somewhat down in becoming the champion of that girl; but, upon my word, she is worth defending, and, between us, we can keep off the rascals who are annoying her."

"Thanks, count," said the chevalier, with suppressed delight. "I shall never forget the service which you are doing me."

While this brief dialogue went on between the two new friends, Law disappeared within the lofty arched doorway of the company's offices, leaving his courtiers to freeze on the threshold of that privileged spot. The greater part of the throng stopped at the door and remained there, staring and gaping as though Mississippi stock were about to fall from the skies, like the manna which once fed the Hebrews in the desert. Others—and these were not the most foolish—began at once to surround the flower-girl whom their idol had honoured by a look and a word.

After having escaped from the somewhat too marked attentions of the all-powerful Law, the girl had gone on in an opposite direction to the crowd and had tried to penetrate it, offering for a few sols the flowers for which the Scotch millionaire had proffered too high a price.

"I beg you to speak for me, little one," said a tall fellow, who wore a sword, but looked like a country squire; "on my word as a gentleman, I will buy you a silk gown and a flame-coloured cloak if you will induce M. Law to let me have a hundred certificates at par. I am Sigismond-Adalbert, Baron de la Carcandière, and a Poitevin noble."

"Your servant, baron," replied Violet, with a graceful curtsey. "I shan't obtain anything from M. Law, for I shan't ask anything of him."

"My charmer," said a stout speculator, covered with gold lace and puffed up with pride and folly, "a hundred louis for you if you will let me go with you so far as M. Law's private room, when you go to the offices and slip in by the back door."

"Keep your hundred louis, Mississipian," replied the flower-girl; "I don't wish to go to India, and I shall not go into the offices by the back or the front door either." Then, without being disconcerted, she went her way with her head erect, a smile on her lips, and pushing her urgent solicitors aside with her hands or elbows.

But the fellows were not discouraged, and the crowd gathered around the little flower-girl was still greater than before. The Chevalier du Terne had caught the arm of Count de Horn, the better to secure the help he needed, and, dragging him along, he attempted to penetrate among the solicitors and idle gazers. He wished to approach Violet, in order to help her in case of need. Horn, who could not understand what danger threatened the lively *grisette* in the pursuit of her business, was somewhat surprised at the zeal shown by his friend in protecting her. But as he already liked Terne very much, and intended to make him his companion and confidant, he took care not to offer objection. They succeeded, without any great difficulty, in penetrating the improvised escort which followed the bouquet-vendor, and were about to escort her, side by side, when there was a strange stir in the crowd. It was idle to attempt to resist the current which suddenly set in. The two friends gave way, and the human tide bore them towards the entrance of an alley which opened into the Rue Quincampoix. Whence had the impulsion come which was thus given to the stock-sellers, and made them abandon the route to the brokers' offices? Terne could not as yet understand it, although he suspected that it was due to the execution of some evil design as regarded Violet. Horn was more puzzled than he, and swore at being

jostled by rough fellows such as these—he, a count, the son of a prince, and who, he flattered himself, was beloved by a marchioness ! and all for the sake of a little flower-girl in a calico gown. By dint of struggling and trying to rise above his neighbours, by treading upon their toes and leaning upon their shoulders, the chevalier had succeeded in looking over the heads of the people, and at a glance he saw what was going on. In place of the solicitors, who, just before, had surrounded Violet, two or three individuals of sinister appearance were now near her, and one of them, whom Terne recognised, had even put his arms about her, and seemed by his voice and gestures to be urging her on. This man was the one who had spoken in a low tone to Law, and he had very probably undertaken to bring him the young flower-girl, for at the end of the lane towards which the scoundrel was now urging her was the rear entrance to the offices of the India Company. There was no doubt an attempt being made to take Violet into the building, and the frivolous crowd was, by its stupid eagerness, favouring the effort. There was not a moment to lose in rescuing her, for the private door was not far off, and if it were closed upon the young girl she could not be saved without besieging the building, and even that would do no good.

Terne resolved not to allow the abominable attempt to succeed, but he hesitated to use violence to prevent it. Not that he feared to expose his life in a dangerous affray, but because he felt that his situation as a conspirator forbade his compromising himself for what interested his heart alone. La Jonquière had especially urged the avoidance of all such things. While Terne was thinking how he might deliver Violet without committing any imprudence, a cry was heard, which made him at once forget his prudent resolves. “Help, help !” called Violet, in a piteous tone. “Come, count !” said Terne, in a low voice, and without turning to see whether his companion was making ready to assist him, he dashed those nearest to him aside with two vigorous thrusts, and darted head foremost towards the group around the flower-girl. The count, who was not a man to remain with his arms crossed while there was fighting going on near him, also plunged into the middle of the crowd, with at least as much ardour as the chevalier.

Their joint attack was highly successful at first. Many people ran off to avoid being hurt, and those who were attempting to carry Violet away, being suddenly attacked, offered no resistance, so that Terne came quite near to the young girl, who uttered a cry of delight, and held out her arms to him. But matters speedily took an unexpected turn.

The scoundrel who was at the head of the abduction, the same who just before had exchanged some words with Law, was no sooner face to face with Terne than he let go of Violet and attempted to seize his assailant by the collar. At the same time he called out to his comrades: “This is one of them ! Help me, and let the girl go ! The trick is played !”

The chevalier undoubtedly understood the meaning of these words, for he sprang back as though he had found a pitfall at his feet. Horn did not understand, but he came to the rescue and drew his sword. Terne, on his side, had already drawn his slender rapier and cried out: “Make way, you rascals, make way, or I will run you through !” Violet was now free, and might have fled ; but, instead of thinking of escaping from her persecutors, she threw herself between them and the chevalier. Meantime, the man who seemed to be at the head of the gang did not lose his self-possession. He had not drawn a sword, for the excellent reason that

he had none to draw, but he put himself on guard in a way of his own, and stood with his legs bent, his body drawn up, and his arms extended in the position dear to the Paris street-stroller. At the same time he said, in a subdued yet distinct voice: "Be bold, my lads. Attack them behind and go for their legs."

The order was executed while he was speaking, and the two young men found themselves surrounded by half a dozen rascals with faces like jail-birds. Horn, in a rage, was about to rush upon them, and Terne was on the point of pinning his vile adversary to the soil, when a great clamour was heard in the direction of the Rue Quincampoix. At the same time the crowd, which kept at a respectful distance from the combatants, began to stir, as crowds usually do at the appearance of any one in authority, and voices were heard calling out:

"The police! the police!"

"I am lost!" muttered the chevalier. Never was a man more perplexed than Louis du Terne de Grandpré in this critical moment. He was literally between two fires. On the one hand there was a gang of rascals, whom he believed to be in the employ of M. d'Argenson, and who barred his way and prevented him from effecting a retreat; and on the other was some magistrate, curious by profession and rigorous by instinct, coming with his usual escort of men and soldiers belonging to the watch. There was a prospect of being interrogated with all the usual annoyances, and, if he did not reply willingly, he would in all probability be sent to the Grand Châtelet. Nothing more was needed to make the conspiracy fail, and the chevalier, determined at all hazards to avoid a talk with the police, realised that he must cut his way through the men who stood about him. The count was also about to make room by thrusting his sword in their faces. Terne had his left arm around Violet's waist, and with his right was flourishing his sword. His adversary drew back, but very slowly, and called out as loud as he could bawl: "Help, help, the watch! Come to me, comrades!"

This appeal must have had some effect upon the police official, for instead of pacing slowly along as is usual with such functionaries, he strode quickly forward. Two soldiers belonging to the French guard escorted him with fixed bayonets, and at sight of him all hostilities at once came to an end. It would be a great mistake to suppose that a police commissary in the eighteenth century was like such a person of our day. He then had certain privileges described as "lower jurisdiction," in addition to those which are now given to such magistrates. He represented the civil and criminal police—that is to say, he was called upon to inquire into crime, sometimes by civil and sometimes by secret process. But whatever might be his occupation in such matters, he never appeared except in full costume—with a gown, bands, and wig. The jesters of the day declared that the magistrates slept thus attired; and, the office frequently being hereditary, some declared that their children came into the world in similar toggery. The individual who had come to quiet the clamour was attired in accordance with this rule. His figure was entirely concealed by the ample folds of a flowing black gown, half of his face was buried in a broad neck-band, and the other half almost concealed by an enormous wig, so that only his nose peered forth, with a huge pair of gold spectacles above it. He was tall and powerful, and drew himself up with a very majestic air. Terne was too much excited to pay any attention to these details of costume, but his adversary closely examined the

magistrate. Horn contented himself with looking at him with scornful indifference. Violet, still overcome by the danger to which she had been exposed, only thought of keeping close to her protector the chevalier.

“What is the matter?” demanded the magistrate, in a nasal tone, which sounded like some sound from an organ.

Terne felt that he must put a good face upon the matter, and made haste to reply: “Sir, I was passing through this street by chance, when I saw some scoundrels trying to drag this young girl away by force. I took her part against them and succeeded in rescuing her from them. I need now only ask you to take her under your protection.”

The magistrate shook his head gravely and opened his mouth, probably to settle the difficulty, but before he could speak the man who had attempted to entrap Violet went up to him and whispered in his ear: “I belong to M. d’Argenson and am acting under orders from him. The girl is only a pretext and can be allowed to go. The man is wanted on account of a crime against the State, and you must send him to prison.” Then the fellow drew back and awaited the sentence with apparent respect and entire confidence in the success of his manœuvre.

But the magistrate, who had shown no surprise at this strange revelation, placed his spectacles more securely upon his judicial nose, and said in a voice like a bassoon: “Who are you, if you please, grey coat, that you take the liberty to come so close to me to speak?”

He who was thus rudely questioned was so astonished by the question that he did not reply. He reddened, and uttered a few words which were not overheard, but which expressed this idea: “The devil take the fool and those who made a judge of him.”

“Do you know, my little friend,” said the magistrate, “that I might have you put into a dungeon for your insolence, just to teach you not to provoke quarrels on the king’s highway.”

The man did not flinch at this threat, but he continued to mutter to himself: “This jackass will make me lose my prey. Where did he come from? I never saw him before. He must be some commissary from the Petit-Châtelet, who is making his round here to ape the heads of the civil police force.”

“Will you answer me, you rascal?” continued the authoritative voice which came through the magistrate’s nose.

“I cannot explain myself here, sir,” said the accused. “Will you take us all before the Lieutenant-General of Police? Then I will speak out.”

“What stuff! Do you suppose that I am not able to decide as to a fellow of your sort? I will show you a thing or two. Come here, you people over there,” added the commissary. “Is it true that this fellow wanted to carry off this pretty girl?”

There was but one shout in reply, and this was: “Yes!” The crowd at the entrance of the bye-street had looked on at the scene without taking part in it, but its sympathy with the flower-girl when violently attacked was beyond a doubt, and as soon as it was seen that the authorities felt the same, the throng turned against her persecutors. “Down with the child stealers! Let us throw the spies into the river!” Then a chorus of insult burst forth with fury: “Let us burn the Company’s offices! Let us burn that scamp Law and all his bank stock with him.” “Down with the ‘Ace of Hearts!’” called out other angry voices, probably those of unlucky speculators, who felt a spite against the Mississippi scheme.

“Gently, my children, gently,” said the commissary, whose voice

sounded like the trump of doom. "No disturbance, or I will call all the guard in the Rue Quincampoix."

The two soldiers of the guard who were present sounded the butt ends of their muskets upon the pavement to bear out this statement, and the noise ceased. The grey coat had quietly thought over the turn that the matter was taking, and had prudently gone back to the mean-looking men who were beside him in the first place. "Come, my friend, be off," said the commissary, "if you do not want to sleep in jail to-night." And seeing that the fellow still hesitated to go, he added: "Unless yon prefer that I should let these people tear you to pieces, as they wish to do."

This last argument proved successful. "I am going, commissary, I am going," called out the scamp, "but you will hear from me before long or my name is not Larfaille." Then running on with one accord, the persecutors of the flower-girl fled to the other end of the bye-street, followed by the shouts of the mob.

The chevalier, who could scarcely believe his eyes, was asking by what miracle an adventure which had begun so badly had ended so well; and Count de Horn, whom the scene did not personally concern, could not but admire the manner in which it had been brought to an end. "Now, my little darling," said the magistrate to the young girl, "come here, and let me scold you, before I send you home."

"I am going home," replied Violet, still trembling; "my parents live close by at the sign of the Epée de Bois."

"Go, my girl, go, and be more prudent in future," said the worthy magistrate, adding a light tap upon her cheek to his advice; "and you, sirs, be less ready with your swords another time." This observation was directed to the two gentlemen.

"Come, escort me to my coach, over there," said the magistrate to his two soldiers, who immediately shouldered their muskets and started to accompany him. And directing himself majestically toward his coach, the equitable magistrate passed close to M. de Horn, and whispered in his ear, in a voice that was no longer nasal: "Well, count, do you think that I can venture to appear in Paris, without danger of being recognised?"

"Colonel La Jonquière!" muttered the young nobleman, lost in astonishment, as the respectable commissary pursued his way without turning back or hastening his pace, leaving Violet and her protectors behind him, and accompanied from afar by the complimentary remarks of the crowd, surprised at so much wisdom and equity. The two soldiers who escorted him nodded each other, laughing quietly to themselves. They occasionally exchanged a word or two and then laughed louder, so that the worthy magistrate saw fit to repress their ill-timed mirth.

It was not, however, because they ran much risk of being overheard, for the lower end of the street was as empty as the other portion was crowded. The throng of spectators, diverted from their financial purposes, had again after a moment returned into the Rue Quincampoix to buy stock. The flower-girl was forgotten for the "Mississippi," and the commissary who had saved her was able to reach his coach without being followed. As he passed in front of the out-houses of the building belonging to Law's Company, he glanced quickly at a certain side-door, and seeing that it was partly open he made somewhat more haste. His coach was stationed at the corner of the Rue Saint-Martin, and as soon as the driver saw him he gathered up his reins, and

seized his whip. There was no one by but some chance passengers, who did not stop to look at the magistrate as he got into his coach. One of the soldiers opened the door and the other let down the steps.

"Go and wait for me, you know where," said the commissary in a loud voice. "And you," he called out to the driver, "do as I told you and make haste. I have an appointment at ten with the lieutenant and the provost-marshall."

These remarks might be overheard by the customers at a grocery-shop near the corner, and were, perhaps, meant for them to hear, for the magistrate, as he spoke, looked at them. He got into the coach, which drove at full speed toward the end of the Rue Saint-Martin, while the two soldiers quickly went back to the Rue Quincampoix. But the horses had so sooner begun to trot than a man hurriedly left the counter of the grocer's shop where he had apparently been bargaining for a Dutch cheese, and ran out on to the sidewalk. He stood a moment, hesitating, looking first at the soldiers and then at the coach—the first were going towards the alley, and the last was proceeding towards the Seine. "I should not learn anything from the soldiers," muttered this man, "I must follow the false magistrate." And he began to run after the coach.

He caught up with it at the first slight stoppage, got hold of the springs and seated himself upon them with his feet hanging down, as Paris urchins do. He did this so adroitly that the driver did not notice he was carrying more than one fare. As for the passers-by, few noticed the grey-coated man, conveniently seated behind the coach which he had undertaken to follow. Those who by chance observed him, saw him make such laughable faces that they laughed too, and shrugged their shoulders, instead of telling the driver that the fellow was riding for nothing. Yet the man was little inclined to mirth, for he was secretly in a great rage. It is needless to say that the strange passenger was Violet's persecutor, the same adversary of Chevalier du Terne, who, a few moments before, had so boldly set about executing the secret orders of Law. When he declared himself about to obey the commissary, he had no intention of doing so. On the contrary, a somewhat ingenious idea had occurred to him. The magistrate who had come up so inopportune to interfere with his affairs inspired him with but little respect or confidence. Under this functionary's ample black gown and vast peruke he detected a false judge, and he even suspected that the soldiers with him had served in the King's galley rather than in the French guard.

Larfaille—for the man in the grey coat, and the police agent who had sworn to avenge the death of the man brought in at the opera ball were one and the same—knew almost all the subordinates of the Lieutenant General of Police, and the face of this magistrate was utterly unknown to him. He had concluded that the gown, peruke, and spectacles, were but a disguise, and he was very desirous of knowing what all this meant. In order to find out he knew of no better way than to follow the sham commissary. Larfaille was an obstinate man, and his perseverance in carrying out his plans was only equalled by his great activity. He had left the opera ball at three in the morning; he had passed the rest of the night in starting a search for the assassins of his unfortunate comrade; and at daylight he had mingled with the crowd of speculators round about the offices of the India Company. It was not without a motive he had gone there. A favourite agent of old Argenson, highly appreciated by Dubois,

and advantageously known to Law, John Larfaillé was a man to whom the most difficult and secret commissions were confided. Now, there was one with which he had been specially charged three months before. It was the catching of the ever-fitting Colonel La Jonquière, the dangerous man who had escaped from the Bastille, and whose presence in Paris kept the prime minister and the head of the police from sleeping. This was an arduous and perilous task beyond all others. The terrible partisan chief had not left the city, the police agent was sure of that; but the game always escaped him. Ten times he thought he held La Jonquière, and yet the latter had escaped. However, within the last few days, some information had led Larfaillé to believe that the colonel and his band often came to the neighbourhood of the Rue Quincampoix, either because they were meditating an attempt upon Law whilst waiting to attack the Regent, or because they had found an asylum near by. An anonymous letter addressed to M. Lebrun, the provost and head of the Marshalsea, had even stated that the pretty flower-girl was the sweetheart of one of the conspirators, and that she appeared every morning among the crowd of speculators. Larfaillé had reached this point in his investigations, when the abominable murder of his friend and comrade, Desgrais, had excited his ardour to the highest pitch. The note attached to the dagger driven into the body which had so imprudently been brought to the opera proved a fresh flash of light, and Larfaillé no longer doubted that La Jonquière had vowed the death of all the agents in search of him. This defiance had been taken up by Larfaillé, and it was in order to begin the struggle that, without hesitating or taking a moment's rest, or even consulting Dubois or Argenson, he had hastened to the Rue Quincampoix. He thought that he should there succeed in surprising some of the flower-girl's admirers, and Law's fancy for the pretty creature had given him the opportunity which he sought. But the adventure which had begun so well had turned against him by the awkward interference of a treacherous or unskillful commissary, and Larfaillé's feelings may be imagined. "The rascal shall pay dear for this," thought he, as he rode behind the coach which had now turned into the Rue de la Ferronnière; "if, by chance, he is really a commissary, I will denounce him to Argenson, who will dismiss him in disgrace. If, as I believe, on the contrary, it is La Jonquière who has got up this new masquerade, so much the better, I shall hold them all, for I will have the bandit arrested at the house where he stops, and through him we shall soon catch the others."

The agent smiled at this delightful thought. There was, however, an obstacle to his hopes. The carriage would perhaps take him to some deserted quarter, and stop at a place where the colonel's brigands had a den, and Larfaillé, alone against a whole gang, would be powerless; however, he was not a man to hesitate. Besides, the coachman did not seem to be going out of the city. He had turned his horses into the Rue Saint-Honoré. "It seems that the commissary has no business at the Châtelet or Palais de Justice, for we are not going in that direction," said the agent to himself. "The rascal does not know that I am here. I'll wager that he will go straight to the house where that infernal colonel has set up his headquarters, and which I have so long been looking for. Well! well! I shall succeed this time." Ten minutes afterwards the coach went more slowly, as though nearing its destination. "I have often thought that those rascals had set themselves down in the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal," said Larfaillé, between his teeth. "They want to have the Regent

under their thumb. Patience! gentlemen, patience! It is you who will fall into my hands."

He was talking thus to himself when the coach turned into the Rue de Valois, and came to a stop near the wall on the left. They had arrived. The agent, who had not expected so sudden a stoppage, had only just time to see the commissary get out. He little expected the surprise which was in store for him.

With a prudence which testified to long practice in difficult arrests, he had taken care to jump off on the right-hand side, so that the coach was between him and the man who was about to alight. Thus sheltered, he counted on being able to observe, without being seen, whatever the commissary might do. His first surprise was to find that the coach had stopped directly in front of the side entrance of the Palais Royal. "Can I be mistaken?" Larfaillé began to mutter to himself, in his amazement at finding that the man whom he had taken for a disguised conspirator was at the Duke of Orleans's door. But this was not the only thing that surprised him. Just as he was about to stare in the face of the false magistrate, an officer got out of the coach. There was no possibility of calling the personage who now appeared anything but an officer, for he was dressed in a tight blue coat of military style. He was booted to the knees, and had on his head a small three-cornered hat tilted over one ear, and ornamented with a knot of yellow ribbons which swept down gracefully over his left shoulder. He seemed, however, to be an officer on half pay, and one who had gone through many exploits and received many wounds, for he leaned as though with difficulty upon a long cane with a curved top, and besides, he had a large bandage over half his forehead, covering his right eye and almost all his right cheek. He was more mutilated apparently than any soldier ever seen since the time of Marshal Rantzau, who had but one eye, one arm, and one leg. This glorious wreck stopped for an instant to close the coach door, as though he wished to allow the stupefied agent time to contemplate his person. Then, with a very graceful gesture, he made a sign to the coachman, who had undoubtedly been paid beforehand, and who, whipping up his horses, made them turn, and after passing the corner of the Rue de Valois, set off at full speed for the Porte Saint-Honoré.

Larfaillé's amazement did not last long, and this was no time to lose his head. He was nearly knocked over by the sudden turning of the coach, but he dexterously escaped from the wheels and made but one leap across the street, quite determined to find some pretext for going up to this officer, who seemed to him in the highest degree suspicious. The agent was quick and vigorous, whereas the officer walked with difficulty. This, however, did not prevent Larfaillé from coming up only just in time to see the back of the officer as he was speaking with the door-keeper of the Palais Royal. As a last misfortune, the talk between them lasted but an instant. The doorkeeper, who no doubt was fully acquainted with the identity of the visitor, respectfully made way to let him pass; and the venerable invalid began to ascend the stairs which led to the first story of the left wing, inhabited by the Regent, and as he went his cane sounded on every step. Larfaillé, who knew very well how the rooms of the palace were distributed, remained in astonishment at seeing the man he had followed quietly taking the same road as the dissolute companions of the duke followed when they repaired to his gay suppers.

This strange individual must have been in the carriage when the com-

missary entered it at the corner of the Rue Saint-Martin, or was he the commissary himself in a new disguise? In either case, how did he contrive to get into the private apartments without any difficulty, and especially at this early hour, when the duke was holding council with his ministers? All these questions and many others darted through the mind of Larfaile, who could find no fitting answer for them. "Fool that I am!" suddenly cried he; "I ought to have followed the coach. The false officer or magistrate—for it is all one—sent the driver away without paying him. The driver, then, must be his accomplice; it is he that I ought to keep after." And he began to run after the carriage. He had scarcely reached the corner of the Rue de Valois when his coolness returned. The carriage was already far away, and there was not the least chance of catching it. "Yes, I am a fool," muttered the agent, stopping short and dashing his hand to his forehead—"I am a great ninny, for I am losing my time in going after a lost scent instead of keeping to that I have here. I was regretting just now not having followed the two sham guards, now I am regretting having let the carriage go away, and here I am at the door of the Palais Royal, where the rascal has gone in. I really do not know what I can be thinking of. Desgrais' tragic end must have troubled my mind."

Then with the suddenness which characterised all his actions, Larfaile ran to the gateway by which the veteran with the yellow top-knot had entered. He ran so fast that he fell into the arms of the door-keeper, whose imposing rotundity filled up the vestibule. "Take care where you are going," roughly said the countryman of William Tell—all the door-keepers at the palace, by the way, were of Swiss extraction.

"I must speak to M. d'Ibaguet, the Regent's bailiff, or to M. Coche, his head valet. I have come on business of State."

At these words the Swiss, who was looking very scornfully at the speaker, and examining him from head to foot, burst out into a roar of laughter. His mouth opened from ear to ear, and a sound came from it like the roaring of thunder, while his huge stomach heaved in the most alarming manner. The agent would willingly have strangled the ill-bred Cerberus, but he needed his help, and he waited patiently till his stupid laughter was over. "How you talk, little fellow!" said the facetious porter between two hiccoughs of hilarity.

"I tell you that I must see the bailiff or the valet who is in waiting. They know me, and—"

"They know you! Who are you, my fine fellow, for them to know you?"

"I am a police agent attached to the personal service of the head of the police," replied Larfaile, thinking, somewhat unwisely, that he would now be allowed to enter the ante-rooms.

"What! a police agent! a spy!" exclaimed the child of Helvetia, striking the halberd which he held upon the steps of the vestibule; "and you dare to come here."

"But I have my master's orders, and he is my lord of Argenson."

"Much I care for your master!"

"When M. Dubois, the prime minister, knows that you have refused to allow me to pass, he—"

"He will say that I did right to act according to my orders. Get out of here, you vermin! get out of here, you gallows bird!" called out the Swiss. At the same time he presented the point of his halberd at the police agent, who was obliged to recoil for fear of being run through.

Poor Larfaillé was choking with rage, but he saw that he would obtain nothing from the mass of flesh and folly before him, and he began to get out of the way of the fellow's formidable weapon. "Very well, I will go away, you old blockhead!" cried he from the street; "I will go this moment to the head of the police and tell him that you deny admittance to people who come to serve the King, and that you let in adventurers disguised as officers——"

"What do you say? What do you say about adventurers? The captain is an intimate acquaintance of the Regent, let me tell you, and now take yourself off or else——"

The terrible halberd was again raised. Larfaillé leapt six feet away and returned grumbling: "The brute will not tell me anything more. I can only do one thing, and that is to warn the minister. He will listen to me and go to the Palais Royal at once, and we shall find out who this captain is who is so intimately acquainted with the Regent—according to that drunken fool there—and who was just now walking about the Rue Quincampoix dressed as a magistrate; for I will bet my head against a certificate of Mississippi stock that he is the very same man."

To find Dubois he was obliged to go up the street and speak to the doorkeeper of a narrow passage in the Cour des Fontaines. It was here that the familiars of the indefatigable Secretary of State entered, and the agent whom he so often employed on secret missions was always admitted without difficulty. The confidential valet charged with receiving visitors admitted him at once; but he learned that the minister, called to Versailles by urgent business, had asked for his carriage at dawn, and did not intend, it would appear, to return till very late in the evening. Larfaillé considered it superfluous to confide his worries to a subaltern, and went away with his head low. He thought for a moment of placing himself like a sentinel at the end of the Rue de Valois, to watch for the departure of the problematical officer; but he reflected that the apartments in the Palais Royal had two or three exits, and that he would probably have his trouble for his pains, without counting that the Swiss doorkeeper was a man to pick a quarrel with him and cause him to be arrested if he saw him prowling about the place. He turned towards Argenson's house, where he hoped to be received by the head of the police himself. But M. d'Argenson had gone to his devotions at the convent of Saint-Madeleine, at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. Larfaillé, quite discouraged, then decided to return home to take a little rest, which he greatly needed, for he had been on foot ever since the night before—in all, thirty-six hours.

III.

WHILE the agent was running after the real or spurious commissary, who had caused him so much worry, Count de Horn and Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré were acting like true gentlemen, as both of them were. Instead of thinking of their own safety, they were agreed as to protecting Violet. The poor little creature was more dead than alive, and palpitating like a sparrow that has escaped the clutches of a hawk. She would probably have swooned away if Louis du Terne had not been near to receive her in his arms. Horn, less excited than his friend, contented himself with mounting guard beside them, and as he had his sword in his hand he

soon distanced all who sought to annoy them. The speculators did not care to approach these two cavaliers, so ready at drawing their swords, and, besides, they had something else to think of than the persecuted flower-girl. They returned to their Mississippi stock, which was in great demand that morning, as it had risen suddenly by five hundred livres, on account of the rumour that Law had been made Comptroller of Finances. The spot was no longer tenable for Violet and her defenders, for their enemies, after having fled, might again appear, now that the commissary was no longer by. The count, besides, had not yet recovered from his surprise since Colonel La Jonquière had whispered to him in passing and revealed the secret of his disguise. So much dexterity in disguising himself, so much tact as to the moment of appearing, and so much boldness in saving his confederates when in a difficulty, were naturally calculated to surprise a young nobleman who was now conspiring for the first time in his life. There was some annoyance and discontent in his mind also, for he was vexed at being obliged to recognise the superiority of an adventurer, and at finding himself in a plot quicker than he had thought to be. The count thought, too, that the chevalier was too easily enamoured of a mere flower-girl, and the contrast between this commonplace love affair and his newly started intrigue with the Marchioness de Parabère was agreeable to his self-esteem. These mingled feelings of his found expression in a somewhat curt sentence which he addressed to Terne : "Chevalier," said he, haughtily, "it seems to me that it is time to take this young girl home. We have, like sword-wearing men, put those rascals to flight. We need not wait till they come back with others to back them. Besides," he said, in a lower toue, "it is not fitting for us to take thus publicly a bouquet-seller under our protection. We ought to leave such things as that to Law and his friends."

"Count," replied Terne, with strange emphasis, "I should be sorry to compromise you, and I think that we should do well to part at once, as I am determined not to abandon this young girl."

Horn considered for a moment whether he ought to take his companion at his word, but, reflecting that the danger was not over, he decided that it would not be generous to desert him. "Never mind that," said he, laughing. "I am yours to command, chevalier, and at the service of any pretty woman whom you may see fit to defend. But do not forget the good advice which the obliging commissary gave us when he so skilfully delivered us from those scoundrels."

This allusion to the prudent warning of La Jonquière was fully understood by Terne, who had recognised the colonel easily, despite his black robes and white peruke. "Come, mademoiselle," said he to Violet, taking her hand to lead her away and help her to pass through the crowd.

The young girl, still greatly troubled, suffered herself to be led off, and the count followed, not without vexation. So long as it was necessary to fight like a perfect Don Quixote for a simple shepherdess insulted by some insolent fellows he had not cared a whit, but it did not suit him to escort the Dulcinea after the victory, especially as she sold common flowers in a calico gown. "If the marchioness saw me now what would she think?" said the vain young gentleman to himself.

This was a very puerile fear, especially as at that hour the marchioness was sleeping soundly. But, at twenty-two, men are apt to think that the woman they love employs her time at night in gazing at the moon. The self-love of the count was not long put to trial. The chevalier and his

charge rapidly traversed the crowd, turned to the left into the Allée de Venise, and stopped before the tavern of the Epée de Bois, still followed by the younger son of the illustrious house of Horn. Blanche-Barbe, the rough tavern keeper, had returned to his post at the door, and was standing with his arms crossed and a pipe between his teeth, seemingly paying but little attention to the customers seated at the tables in his lower room. But as soon as he saw Violet coming towards him, led by the chevalier, he began to frown and went up to them.

“Master Pierre,” said Terne, with some embarrassment, “while your daughter was selling her flowers she was insulted by half-a-dozen rascals whom we put to flight.”

“Aha!” exclaimed the innkeeper, whose eyes flashed angrily, “this gentleman was with you, then?”

“Of course,” stammered the chevalier, quite out of countenance.

“By Saint Liévin, that is beyond everything!”

“What objection have you to make?” demanded the count, haughtily.

“I did not speak to you,” growled the innkeeper.

“What do you mean, you rascal?”

At this insult the tavern-keeper stepped forward with his hands clenched, but at once contained himself and said, coldly: “We are not in Liège, sir, where you and yours can abuse your rights as lords with impunity. We are in France, and I will not be insulted. Go your way, unless you wish to come to harm.”

Horn was about to reply more angrily than before, but the chevalier made haste to speak so as to turn his anger from Master Pierre: “Come, do not let us have a quarrel here, I beg. You know that this gentleman is one of our party, that we are constantly spied upon, and that but little would be needed to put the head of police upon his guard. In the colonel’s name, control yourself.”

La Jonquière, besides his other merits, must have had a faculty for taming bears, for Terne had scarcely uttered these words when Blanche-Barbe grew silent as regarded the count. “Let it be as you say,” grumbled he; “I shall not busy myself about this gentleman if he will do me the favour not to meddle with my affairs.”

“I do not wish to do so, indeed, for they do not interest me,” said the count, turning his back contemptuously.

“Let us think of your daughter, who is still quite overcome,” said the chevalier.

“She only had what she deserves,” replied Blanche-Barbe, giving Violet a dark look that was very unlike a parent’s.

“Father, I assure you——” began the poor girl.

“Hold your tongue and hear what I have got to say!” harshly interrupted Pierre. “You had an honest occupation. It suited you to leave it to go and sell flowers, like the bold creature you are.”

“My mother allows me to do so,” said Violet, with a sigh.

“And I forbid you, for I do not wish to be obliged to go to claim you at the hospital where abandoned creatures are sent.”

“Master!” exclaimed Terne, pale with anger.

“Let me finish, sir! My daughter is my own, and I alone am responsible for the honour of my name,” said the tavern-keeper with the air of a prince. “And you,” added he, looking at the young girl from head to foot, “have only to obey, as I command you to do. Before you took the foolish fancy of selling bouquets into your head you were a mender of linen.”

Violet hung her head ; the chevalier reddened to the ears, and Count de Horn could not repress a sarcastic smile.

“ It is a good calling,” resumed the pitiless Blanche-Barbe, “ and I require you to resume it at once. The stand where you worked is still in its place, over there against the opposite wall. It is an excellent stand, you won’t lack customers, and you can work under your mother’s eyes and mine. That will be better than running about the streets with a basket on your arm.”

The chevalier would have been glad if the earth had opened. He had scarcely courage to mutter : “ You cannot mean it, Master Pierre. Your daughter cannot, without degrading herself, do work that brings her in contact with the lowest people——”

“ Excuse me, sir, you forget that my daughter herself belongs to the people, as I do. She will not lower herself by earning her living by mending stockings, even those of the lackeys and servant-girls of the district. Come here, Jeannette—you were called Jeannette when you were baptised, and I don’t intend that you shall be called by any other name—throw down that basket at once, and go and seat yourself over yonder. You shall not idle away your time, for I will tell your mother to send you needles and thread.”

To describe what was felt by Violet and the chevalier during this terrible discourse, would be as impossible as to render the cruel severity of Master Pierre’s face. The poor girl raised her large eyes, filled with tears, to those of her dear defender, and let her basket fall. Her flowers rolled out upon the pavement, and she looked at them sadly. Her lovely dream had fled. Terne came near flying at the throat of the implacable father, who had resumed his attitude of indifference, but he contained himself by a mighty effort. Then he stopped down, picked up a bouquet of violets, pressed it to his heart with an expressive look at Violet, and said in a firm voice : “ Come, count, this is no place for us.”

The scene had disgusted rather than interested Count de Horn. He felt quite indifferent to the tavern-keeper, the flower-girl, and their family quarrels. The lower classes had no existence in his eyes, any more than the humble and industrious ant has in those of the lion, and he was not far from thinking that the chevalier was ridiculous, and lowered himself by troubling himself about such common creatures. He, therefore, did not need any persuasion to go. On his side, Terne was anxious to get away from the place where he had suffered so much in his love and through his vanity. At twenty-five such wounds bleed long and copiously, and one prefers to hide rather than to expose them to the eyes of a friend by way of seeking a cure. The chevalier dragged Horn through the groups of stock-dealers, and walked beside him for a long time without entering into any confidential conversation. He took care to get out of the Rue Quincampoix by a different route to that taken by Colonel La Jonquière, and they walked on silently till they came to the cloister of Saint Jacques de la Boucherie. It seemed as though they had made up their minds to hold their tongues, and yet they longed to talk ; but neither wished to be the first to speak. Horn finally broke the ice at the moment when they reached the wharf of La Ferraille. “ Faith, chevalier,” said he, with a careless air, “ it must be confessed that Paris is a strange city. I have been here but a month, and only came to amuse myself, and now in one night I find myself brought into a regular conspiracy in which it seems to me that my head is in danger,”

"You are right there, count. Our lives are certainly at stake."

"Well, I may say, then—especially as I have no wish now to draw back—that if I had known I was entering into a real partisan war I should have thought twice before enrolling myself in the troop of the illustrious Colonel La Jonquiere."

"And you would have done well to hesitate. It is a hard and painful task to be a conspirator; besides, it seldom brings what it costs, and when, as is the case with you, the future lies before a man, he must be mad to enter into it lightly."

"But you are a conspirator, too."

"Oh! it is different with me."

"How is that?"

"You are of too great a house, although a younger son, not to make your way in the world; but I, who became a poor officer on half pay at the very time when I hoped to be at the head of a regiment, am forced, I may say, to run every risk if I do not wish to vegetate in poverty and obscurity."

"This is strange," muttered Horn. "From your gay and open air I shouldn't have guessed that you were ambitious; and I have the more trouble in believing it after—"

"After what, count?"

"After seeing you—why should I not speak out?—take so tender an interest in that young girl."

Terne reddened, but calmly replied: "I understand you, count. You are surprised that a nobleman—I am as noble as you are, for my ancestors, like yours, were at the First Crusade—should, however poor he may be, seriously love a low-born girl." Horn nodded in reply. "I might give you many reasons for thus letting myself down," resumed the chevalier in a sad and grave voice. "I might tell you that having neither money nor influence in my favour, I rose by my own efforts to a captaincy in the Walloon Guards; and that this position was taken from me by outragous injustice, which, consequently, leaves me free from all social ties, and at liberty to love as may please me. But I had rather tell you plainly that I feel a true passion for the poor girl whom you have seen, and whom you have helped me to rescue, a passion which rises above petty interests and vain prejudices, and that I am ready to give my life to it and to her."

"Would you also sacrifice the interests of the conspiracy?" asked the count, in a tone of irony.

"No," replied Terne, frankly, "for that would be sacrificing my honour at the same time; but I shall not be called upon to choose between love and duty, for, although Violet is not in the conspiracy, she, at least, is at heart against the Regent and with the adversaries of all those who are injuring France, and therefore against the rakes and dissolute women whom the Regent allows to do as they please; that vile scamp Dubois, who is sold to England, and Law, especially, that proud adventurer who dares to pursue a pure, proud girl with his insolent proposals." At the end of this outbreak the count shook his head. He was thinking: "That is where the shoe pinches, chevalier!" But he was too polite to express his thoughts aloud. "Besides," said Terne, "her father is the soul of the conspiracy, for although he does not take an active part in it, his house has become, as you have seen, the colonel's headquarters."

"Her father," replied Horn, "does not appear to have any very tender

feelings towards her, to judge from the brutality with which he treats her. Tell me where this surly bear comes from, who is so villainously rude to his charming daughter, and who pretends to know me, no doubt to excuse his disagreeable familiarity."

"He came from our own country, count. He has been fifteen years in France, but was born in Flanders, and I think that he was for a long time a gamekeeper in some forest which belongs to your house."

"Aha! that explains his having seen my father in former days, as he says he has; my father no doubt dismissed him for some unfaithful act."

"No one knows why Picrre Blanche-Barbe left his native land."

"What! not even his wife, that jolly-looking gossip whom you call Dame Margot, and who seems to like you better than her clown of a husband does?"

"His wife certainly knows the secret of his exile; but she keeps it to herself, and woe to her if she let it be known, for her husband is not a man to be disobeyed."

"I noticed that, and I pity your beauty for being under the authority of this rustic despot. But tell me, my dear chevalier, as we are speaking confidentially, how do you hope to carry on your courtship, now that the poor little girl is condemned to sit at a stall and mend linen?"

"My courtship is doomed to all sorts of tribulations until the conspiracy succeeds, and then I shall be free as to my actions and sure as to my fortune, for the King of Spain will then give me a regiment. So then, with or without Master Pierre's permission, I shall take Violet to Spain, and we shall be married by the priest of the first village which we find beyond the Pyrenees. Meantime I shall suffer what I cannot prevent, for I feel that I shall be able to protect my future wife from her father's severity, and especially from the gallantry of the 'Ace of Hearts' and his vile agents."

"So be it, chevalier!" said the young count, playfully. "In fidelity as well as courage you can compare with the heroes of the romances of chivalry; and since Amadis de Gaul——"

"Let us speak of yourself, now, my dear count," interrupted Terne, who did not like jokes about his love affairs. "You told me that you felt some scruples about your engagement with the colonel."

"No, I have made up my mind, for I am determined that Philip shall give me satisfaction."

"Will you allow me to give you some good advice?"

"Willingly."

"Well, then, count, give up a project which would carry you much further than you think. La Jonquière would be very much dissatisfied if he heard me dissuading you from conspiring with us; but no matter! Besides, I will undertake to explain your conduct to him if you wish to withdraw. We are sure of your discretion, and I will promise to demonstrate to the colonel that he ought to be content with that."

Horn reflected an instant before replying. His pride struggled against his reason, which told him to pause on a dangerous course. The two young men had just crossed the Pont Neuf, and reached the entrance of the Rue Dauphine, where the count lived. His new friend brought him to his door. "By my faith," exclaimed Horn, "I shall go on! Apart from the satisfaction which I hope to have from the Duke of Orleans, I am too much interested in suppressing the sole obstacle which separates me from

the marchioness not to help the worthy men who propose to take him out of my way."

"Then you are determined to risk your life for the purpose of carrying on an intrigue with Madame de Parabère?" said Terne, sadly.

"The marchioness is well worth the trouble, my dear sir, and I should not have expected such an objection from you."

"What if the coquette has already forgotten you? She is an ambitious woman who has never loved sincerely," replied the chevalier, without noticing the allusion to his own lowly choice.

"If I thought that, I—"

"Alas! you will have only too much reason to believe it. Madame de Parabère may have been flattered by the passion which she has inspired in a nobleman of your rank and appearance. She may have encouraged it for a moment; but she only cares for pleasure, wealth, and power. The Regent gives her all that, and she would not run the risk of losing it."

The contradictory feelings awakened in Horn's heart by this wise warning were clearly legible in his face, and the chevalier began to hope that he might convince him of the truth of what he said; but just then a lackey dressed in a simple livery made his appearance and interrupted the conversation by coming towards the young count and respectfully handing him a letter. "What does this mean? Who sent it?" asked Horn.

"A messenger brought it, count," replied the servant, "and asked me to give it to you as soon as possible. I was very much troubled at finding that you did not return, and I was going in search of you, thinking that you would come back by the Pont Neuf," was the reply.

Horn did not listen to his old servant. He had broken the seal, was reading the letter, and his face lighted up. "Hold, chevalier! what do you think now of your fears and solemn predictions?" he exclaimed suddenly, holding out the letter to Terne.

It was in a woman's handwriting, and delicately traced, but in an irregular manner, such as fine ladies affected in the gay days when spelling and writing were not valued, and it ran thus:—"The bat cannot see you in Paris, for the daylight is too bright for her. She sometimes goes, however, to a retreat on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières. There you cannot enter, but if you will buy a small house in the village the bat will pay you a visit. Be prudent and discreet. You are beloved."

"Well, chevalier," said the count in Terne's ear, "will you still say that I have not good reasons for conspiring against a man who is an obstacle to my happiness? I am going to shut myself up and read this delightful letter over twenty, a hundred times! Come to see me soon, I am yours to command. To the dev' with scruples, and long live Colonel La Jonquière!"

IV.

LARFAILLE lived in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux in the Marais, in a petty lodging under the roof of a dingy, tottering old house. He had inhabited this den for the last twenty years, and he thought the less of leaving it from the fact that he enjoyed the sympathy and the esteem of all the citizens in the neighbourhood. His position as a police agent did not injure him, although, as a rule, the susceptible Parisians have always disliked those who are in any way attached to the police. It is true that,

apart from his formidable functions, Larfaillé was the mildest and most obliging of men. Besides, a police agent in the eighteenth century was quite unlike a policeman of the nineteenth century. In the first place, there were police agents of various kinds. In certain cavalry corps the agent was an officer having the rank of captain and fulfilling the police duties of the regiment. There was the constabulary, otherwise called the marshalsea, which had certain police duties like those of the gendarmerie of the present day in France, and there were the so-called "short-robed" agents, placed under the direct orders of the chief of the criminal police, and appointed to watch over the safety of Paris, to restrain all sorts of rascals and unknown men, to notify certain orders of the King, and especially those terrible arbitrary warrants of imprisonment called "*lettres-de-cachet*," whereby—without either accusation or trial—his Majesty occasionally provided one of his subjects with a lodging in the Bastille. These men also had to seek for and arrest robbers and murderers, and even to be present at their execution. Larfaillé had become a police agent because it ran in his family—his father and uncle having been in the "mounted watch"—and also because he had a natural liking for the employment. He was born with a genius for intrigue, not in the bad sense of the word, for he had never devoted his rare abilities to an evil end; but he possessed in the highest degree a talent for penetrating the most obscure mysteries, unravelling the most intricate plots, and combining the most skilful measures for thwarting the most carefully laid plans. He had what may be called a passion for the mysterious. When very young he had liked to guess riddles, charades, and arithmetical problems. When a man, he wished to apply his mind to less childish puzzles. It was for this reason that he followed his father's calling, and could certainly have found none better suited to his abilities.

Under Louis XIV., who first established a true police in Paris, and under his successor, there was, high up in the official hierarchy, a magistrate bearing the title of lieutenant-general and occupying one of the most important positions in the State—La Reynie, the two Argensons, and Sartines, occupying such posts—and this personage who represented great political, administrative, and municipal interests, had no time to deal with details. Below him there was an army of inferior agents, the lieutenants of the criminal police and the civil police, the provost, the head of the watch, and the counsellors of the Châtelet, all of them chosen among the citizen classes, and all handsomely paid in good gold, and scorning to put their own hands to the wheel. After these came the commissioners, bailiffs, sheriffs, head constables, and other small fry of the magistracy, and then the detectives. The detective, who was partly magistrate, partly soldier, and partly spy, was the mainspring of all this clock-work. On him alone rested the responsibility of looking into crime and pursuing criminals, and if his merit was known and appreciated by the higher authorities, he was allowed to do as he pleased. Incredible struggles occurred between these humble agents, raised to the level of the highest by their feeling of absolute responsibility, and the guilty offenders, manoeuvring, resisting, and fighting, till one or the other conquered. The detective made the criminal his only object, his invariable aim, his one purpose. He pursued him till he reached him, always and everywhere; in Paris, in the provinces, in the forests, in the streets, both within and without the frontiers of the kingdom. La Brinvilliers, who fled to Liège, after having poisoned her father and brothers, was arrested by a detective

who disguised himself as a Court abhé, and who approached her with affectionate words, and led her into a trap laid for her by the French police. This detective, of whom the renown has come down to us, was named Desgrais, and was the father of that Desgrais, the second of the name, who, with the ability of his father before him, had arrested Colonel La Jonquière at Liège, also. But Desgrais the younger had come to grief, as he was stahhed and killed, and carried to the opera hall to serve as a warning to his comrades and employers. Larfaille had heen his friend, and, as it has heen told, he had sworn to avenge him.

On the morrow of the day on which he had been turned away from the door of the Palais Royal, Larfaille, still very much disturbed by his mishap, and quite ashamed at having heen tricked by a false magistrate, was finishing his morning meal, in all haste, in his modest lodging in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, prior to setting out once more. He had a deal on hand that day. In the first place, he had received a note from Duhois, the prime minister, which enjoined upon him to repair at an early hour to his private cahinet to receive important instructions, and he was careful not to delay about going to an appointment with so powerful a personage. He had, besides, set a task for himself, which he had greatly at heart. He resolved to go alone to the Rue Quincampoix to watch the flower-girl's movements. His instinct as a detective told him it was in that neighbourhood that hc must look for the nest of the conspiracy, and that he had not heen mistaken the evening before when he had thought of making use of Violet to force the conspirators to appear, just as sportsmen use a sparrow to utter notes which bring other birds about it. But he knew that it would be unwise to show himself in the same attire as before, and had therefore put on a simple, neat costume, which he usually wore when not at his employment. Dressed in black from head to foot, he looked like a procuror in undress. Thus equipped, he was ready to go to the Palais Royal ; still he lingered over his meal, for he had something to say to a companion. Larfaille did not live alone. He had never known his mother, who had died in bringing him into the world ; he had lost his father twenty years before ; he was an only child, and had no relatives living, nor had he ever married. The companion who lived with him was a child when he came, in 1709, to live at the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, and now, in 1720, she was but little over sixteen. She could not be his sister, as both his father and mother had died before she was born. It was rumoured that she was his daughter, but she was so unlike him that it did not appear likely. The poor girl was deformed. She was not hump-backed, but crooked, although at first sight she might seem humpbacked rather than lame. She had not, however, the badly-proportioned extremities, the drawn features, or the distorted shoulders of a humphack. Her delicate and pain-racked form was bent somewhat upon one side, like a fragile bush that is too weak to grow erect. The breath of life seemed feeble in her, so that at an age when she should have looked like a young girl she still appeared to be almost a child. Her features lacked bloom and regularity, and she had a look of sickly melancholy. Still her person was not wanting in a certain timid grace. Her feet were small and arched, her hands white and delicate ; her voice was extremely sweet, and her large blue eyes had singular brillancy and a penetrating charm. But to appreciate these good points more observation was necessary than belonged to the worthy people in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, and throughout the street poor Gudule was considered to be a monster of ugliness.

She bore the name of a saint greatly venerated in Brussels, Sainte-Gudule, and she had been born in Flanders. Her story, which no one in the place was acquainted with, and which she herself knew but imperfectly, was a simple one. Towards the end of 1703, Larfaillé had been sent upon a mission to Amsterdam to discover certain pamphleteers who were suspected of inundating France with pamphlets against Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. He finally found them in Maestricht, and, as he could not arrest them there, he made haste to return to Paris to give an account of his expedition. In passing through Liège something occurred which he had not expected. It was in the evening; he had just stopped at the "Coffy" inn, and was going to take a coach that was starting for Namur, when, in passing through a lonely street, he thought he heard a cry or complaint. He stopped, went up to the wall whence the sound had seemed to come, and in a sort of niche at the foot of a statue of the Virgin, he saw a child in swaddling clothes. The discovery was a tolerably common one, and the detective did not feel like undertaking the task of Saint Vincent de Paul. However, in spite of his profession, his heart was not a hard one, and he took up the new-born babe and tried to warm it under his cloak. His first impulse had been to retrace his steps and take the poor little creature to the innkeeper, who might have made it a citizen or citizeness of Liège, but he reflected that this would cause him to miss the coach, and that the delay would be a great misfortune.

A strange idea then came into his head. He remembered that he was alone in the world, without any one to interest himself in, and that his inclinations and pursuits kept him a bachelor. He thought that heaven had sent him exactly what he needed—a being to protect and love. Without reflecting as to the result of the adventure, and the impossibility of carrying a little baby with him, he went on till he reached the coach, to which he had already sent his baggage. The coach was ready to start, and among the passengers the detective found a fat Walloon woman carrying a fine child. This unlooked-for meeting caused him to make up his mind.

He spoke to the gossip, learned that she was going to Paris to join her husband, a cook at the Prince de Conti's palace, and at once so cleverly contrived a story, that the good woman agreed to tend the child whom the detective had saved from certain death. She did as she agreed, and on the fifth day all the passengers reached Paris safe and sound, including the foundling—which proved to be a little girl—whom Larfaillé at once put out to nurse at Gonesse. He left her there for five years, but never failed to interest himself about her, and as soon as she was old enough to do without a woman's care he took her home to the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux. He was the more attached to the poor little creature from the fact that she owed her life to him, and was so fragile. She did not grow, and her nurse maintained that she was "rickety," as the peasants say, and in this, unfortunately, she was not mistaken. She had but little breath in her body, but although her figure was bent instead of upright, her intelligence developed surprisingly fast, and not at the expense of her heart, for she was affectionate beyond all that Larfaillé had hoped for. There was not the slightest indication of her origin, unless it were a scapulary hung around her neck, and in which was enclosed a paper, on which was written: "My name is Gudule, and I was born on the 9th December, 1703."

The detective had caused the child to be baptised under the name of Gudule, and had not tried to penetrate the mystery of her birth. He was

too fond of her to care to find her parents. He even allowed her to believe that she was really his daughter, and the child certainly loved him as though he had been her father. Besides, she had been accustomed from her girlhood up to take care of his household, and to make herself useful during the long hours which she passed at home alone. Protected in the first place by her age, and also by her plainness, the young girl often did not need the guardianship of her father, who was obliged to be away all day. When he returned in the evening, almost always worn out, and often anxious, he found his meals ready and Gudule happy and glad, and waiting impatiently to see and amuse him after his hard tasks were over. He taught her all that he knew, and for a police agent he was not wanting in education ; and soon the little creature could write out a report from his dictation as well as read aloud to him all the evening. Time but strengthened their mutual attachment, and at the period when this story begins Larfaillé lived only for Gudule's sake. He had laid by twelve thousand livres—his savings for twenty years—and had placed the money in the hands of a notary, with a will in regular form, making the girl heiress to it all. This was suspected by the neighbours, so that sundry bold clerks or intrepid shopmen began to address gallant remarks to Gudule as she went along the streets of the Marais. She, however, when they became over bold, had a certain way of looking at them which nailed them to the spot, and, having produced this effect, she would go her way to visit her customers, for Gudule had her customers. The detective had wished her to follow some kind of calling, and she had learned to wash, or rather to iron. She employed two women, who spared her the more laborious part of her business, and she did the folding and starching of the frills, cuffs, and cravats—a delicate task, which she fulfilled with marvellous skill. Her customers, as we say nowadays, when even shoe-blacks have "customers," were composed of young counsellors, or sons of the higher citizens, who never looked at a poor deformed girl or addressed her with any gallant remarks. Thus her virtue ran no danger.

On the morning alluded to, Larfaillé had just finished the frugal repast prepared for him by his adopted daughter, and was putting on his cloak to go to the prime minister's house, when Gudule suddenly said to him : "Father, what is a chevalier?"

If lightning had struck Larfaillé he could not have been more surprised than by this simple question so unexpectedly put to him by his adopted daughter. He believed that Gudule had, till then, lived in total ignorance of social distinctions, and he could not understand what she meant by inquiring the precise meaning of a title of nobility. He had a great mind to question instead of replying to her, but, at all risks, he determined to give an evasive answer, and accordingly said : " My child, there is the chevalier of the watch, under whose orders I formerly served."

"No, no, father, that is not what I mean," said Gudule.

"What do you mean, then?" asked Larfaillé, forcing a smile.

"A chevalier," said the young girl, "is a young man who is different from other people. He looks proud, but he is affable. He speaks haughtily to his host, who is a rich merchant, but civilly to me who am only a poor girl. He dresses simply, but he has fine linen and lace, like a lord."

"What is all this? Are you talking about one of your customers?"

"Yes, father, I am talking of the lodger at Master La Perrelle's, the

mercer in the Rue Saint-Antoine. I have been washing for him for three months, and I go there twice a week, for he takes great care of his person."

"What does he do? He must be a dandy."

"Oh, nothing! I don't know, but I am sure that he does not work, for his hands are too white for that."

"So much the worse for him, my girl, for an idle man is useless in this world. But what makes you think that he has a right to the title of chevalier? It cannot belong to any but a nobleman, and a nobleman would hardly be lodging with La Perrelle."

"I know nothing about that, father, but I know that yesterday when I went to carry some Marlins lace cuffs to M. Lestang——"

"Ah! his name is Lestang?"

"Yes, father. I found him at the door of his house, talking to a man whose face frightened me, and who went away saying in a low voice: 'To-morrow, chevalier. I rely upon your punctuality, as it is perhaps the great day.'"

"That is strange!" muttered Larfaille.

He fell to thinking in the way which his pursuit as a detective led him to do. All that he did not know seemed suspicious to him, and he scented a track in the least petty mystery. But his tenderness for Gudule soon conquered his detective propensities, and he at once began to attempt to warn the girl against the voluntary or involuntary attractions of this real or spurious chevalier. "My child," said he, drawing her to his heart, "you love me, do you not?"

"Oh, father! how can you ask me whether I love you?"

"You would not grieve me?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then don't go again to this lodger of Master La Perrelle's till I have found out all about him."

Gudule lifted her large eyes to Larfaille's face with an expression of astonishment which clearly showed her innocence, and the grief which she felt at this request, which resembled an order. "You will promise me, will you not?" said the detective.

"Yes, father," said the girl dejectedly.

"And I will promise you to find out soon all about this M. Lestang. Now, my dear Gudule, kiss me and say good-bye till to-night. I have a good deal to do to-day, and I may not come in till supper-time."

"Good-bye, father," said the girl, throwing her arms around his neck with affection, whereat he speedily forgot his uneasiness.

He had only time enough now to reach the Palais Royal, and he made haste to set out. "This is all nonsense," said he to himself, as he went down stairs. "Gudule has not a thought of evil, and no one is thinking of making love to her. Heaven was kind in depriving her of beauty. But I must inquire about this chevalier. I do not know why, but I feel suspicious of him."

This soliloquy only lasted till he turned the corner of the Rue-du-Pont aux-Choux. Among other professional qualifications, Larfaille had that of never confusing two distinct matters. His brain was like a desk divided into various compartments, each having a special purpose. All his information was arranged in due order in it, and never got out of order, and whatever number of reports might be lodged in his cranium, he always knew to which to turn without mistake or perplexity. At the moment,

the detective was entirely engrossed with the conspiracy led by the invisible La Jonquière, and—what was one and the same matter according to him—with the discovery of the assassins of Desgrais, his unfortunate comrade. On the afternoon after the discovery which had ended his pursuit of the commissary, he had only taken time enough to go home to change his clothes, and had spent his evening in getting together all possible information as to the murder committed during the night of the opera ball. He had already got several hints together, for all the subalterns to whom he gave orders had made it a point of honour to avenge their companion, and showed great zeal in looking for the assassins, who, they feared, would some day deal in the same manner with them. All these scattered indications being united and classed in his head, Larfaillé hoped soon to complete his task, and, meantime, he was about to lay his information before the minister, who had taken up the affair with feverish eagerness.

This time the detective experienced no difficulty in entering the Palais Royal. He was announced to the ushers, and they at once took him to the private rooms where Dubois was waiting for him. He met Venier, the minister's secretary, at the door. Venier was a quiet, formal man, who gave him a friendly nod, and asked him to wait an instant. Larfaillé, who was used to the airs of the subordinates about the higher powers, humbly retired to an obscure corner, and quietly waited. He did not have to wait long. The door of the study was violently thrown open, and the minister came out like a whirlwind. His periwig was awry, his eyes were starting out of his head, and he was foaming at the mouth. A torrent of oaths and insults burst from his lips, for his secretaries had forgotten to deliver at the proper time some correspondence from a diplomatic agent in Madrid. "The rascals drive me crazy!" cried Dubois, shouting in a frightful manner. "I had twenty of them there, and yet it seems that they are not enough; I will have fifty, a hundred—"

The detective did not know where to hide, but Venier said, with perfect calmness, to the minister: "You need only take one clerk more, and let him do your storming and swearing for you. All will be well then, for it will leave you a great deal of idle time." Dubois calmed himself as if by magic, twatched at the band about his neck, and finally laughed aloud. "Besides," said the secretary, "the man whom you sent for is here, and wishes to speak to you."

The minister immediately turned to the corner of the room where he saw Larfaillé, caught him by the collar, and dragged him more dead than alive into his study. After kicking the door to, he let go of the unfortunate detective, flung himself into a large arm-chair, into which his slender person sunk almost out of sight, crossed one leg over the other, took his right foot in his left hand, and shouted at the pitch of his voice: "Where are the murderers who killed that man last night?" Larfaillé opened his mouth to reply, but Dubois began to stutter again, exclaiming: "Speak, you rascal! Do you mean to deride me? Do you think that I have any time to lose?"

"Monseigneur," said the detective, "I have not caught them yet, but I am on their track."

"What does that amount to? What do you mean by 'track'? It is their infernal carcasses that I want, to hang them, or break them on the wheel, or burn, or draw and quarter them! Track, indeed! That is all stuff! Let me tell you, my friend, that I cannot be deceived, and that I hold you responsible for them on your life."

“Monseigneur,” replied Larfaille, firmly, “you may do as you please with me, but I can do no more than I am doing. I will undertake to discover who has committed this abominable crime; but I cannot do so within a given time, although I am more interested than any one else in avenging the death of Firmin Desgrais, who was my comrade.”

“I don’t care anything about the death of your Desgrais,” replied the intractable Dubois. “Do you think that I should take so much trouble about such a matter as that? Not at all. If I wish to find out who these people are, it is because I am sure they belong to La Jonquière’s gang, and that, through them, we shall reach him. Do you understand me?”

“I agree with you, monseigneur.”

“He is in the city, that rascal La Jonquière is, and I was not mistaken when I thought that I came upon him giving orders to one of his men at the opera ball an instant before they began their masquerade with the dead body. He is here, I tell you; I have been apprised of it just now by this letter which my good-for-nothing clerks ought to have handed to me yesterday.”

“It is certain, monseigneur, that the colonel is in Paris, and it was by his orders that Desgrais, who was following him very closely, was stabbed.”

“And you tell me all this in that quiet way! It is now thirty-six hours since the rascals killed your colleague, and you spend your time in talking about it! What have you done? What have you found out?”

“I already know where the murder was committed, monseigneur.”

“You know it, and you have not yet told me!” shouted Dubois, making a gesture as though he were going to tear off his wig. This was his favourite gesture whenever he flew into a rage.

“You have not given me an opportunity to do so, monseigneur,” replied Larfaille.

“Then you ought to have taken it. Come, speak, and make haste! Be clear and brief. I am in a hurry.”

“Well, then, monseigneur, this is what I have learned: Desgrais was charged with watching the approaches to the Palais Royal.”

“Charged by whom?”

“By M. d’Argenson, who had the utmost confidence in him.”

“Good! if this Desgrais were a creature of Argenson’s, I am not surprised that he should have let himself be killed like an idiot,” said the minister, who did not like the lieutenant-general of the police force.

Larfaille naturally abstained from taking up this taunt addressed to his own chief, and modestly continued his report. “My poor comrade had a suspicion a month ago that La Jonquière’s gang frequented a tavern in the Rue Pierre-Lescot. He remarked, it appears, some suspicious goings and comings around the den kept by a man named Ricœur—formerly the lackey of a financier.”

“And a gallows-bird, of course. ‘Like master, like man,’ ” interrupted Dubois, who admired the law, but hated financiers.

“Unfortunately,” resumed the detective, “Desgrais, who was very zealous in his profession, was jealous and suspicious, and whenever he had found a track he liked to keep it to himself.”

“Come now, you rascal, do you imagine that I sent for you to hear your opinion of the disposition of your friend Desgrais?”

“Excuse me, monseigneur. What I am now telling you is to make you understand how it was that he fell into a snare without being helped

by us. He ascertained that meetings went on at this Ricœur's house, but he did not tell this to his comrades, not even to me, from whom he had no reason to fear anything. He wished to have the honour and profit of the discovery as well as the danger."

"How did you find out that he went there, if he did not tell any one?"

"Desgrais, like all men of talent, had some envious enemies. Two watchmen, who did not like him, had remarked that he often prowled about the place in the Rue Pierre-Lescot, in the evening, and they watched him through pure jealousy. On the night of the opera ball they saw him go out, disguised as a porter; they followed him to the door of Ricœur's tavern, where he seated himself and began to drink with some men of bad appearance, who were there before he appeared. The watchmen then went away, and from that time Desgrais was never seen till he was found a corpse—lying upon a litter with a dagger in his heart."

"Those two scoundrels must be discharged."

"No, monseigneur; for although they were led by a bad motive, it is none the less true that without them we should not be in possession of the slightest scent, whereas now—"

"True. Then this Ricœur is arrested; he will speak; he must; and if he refuses, torture him!"

"Alas! monseigneur, we have not come to that yet."

"How is that?" stammered Dubois. "You have let him escape, then? That is too much, and you shall pay the penalty, let me tell you?"

"I am in your hands, monseigneur, and quite ready to answer for what I have done; but be good enough to remember that these facts only came to my knowledge on the afternoon of the day after the murder."

"Well, then, you ought to have got your people together without loss of time, and have hastened to the tavern, seized and bound all who were there, thrown them into a dungeon, and informed me of the capture."

"I should have done so, my lord, had it been in my power. I learned at two o'clock that Desgrais had been seen the evening before at Ricœur's tavern; and at three, I arrived at the inn with a squad of watchmen. It was unfortunately too late. The assassins had disappeared—"

"They must have received warning. We are betrayed by our police! I can see the folly of that Argenson, who selects these men."

"Monseigneur, I think that when they had committed the crime, the wretches concluded they had better make off. We found the tavern closed, and the neighbours told us that it had not been opened in the morning, as usual."

"Did you break down the door? I hope so."

"Yes, monseigneur, and carefully examined the whole den. The murderers were no longer there, but they had left traces of their crime; there were fragments of clothing upon the floor, blood on the furniture and walls, and everywhere. Desgrais must have been induced, upon some pretext or other, to enter a room behind the counter, and was there, no doubt, assailed by several men, garroted after a desperate resistance, and stabbed at once by a single blow from a firm hand."

"Good!" replied the minister, without showing the slightest emotion at this horrible narrative, "but how do you account for the masquerade with which the assassins amused themselves? After such an expedition they must have thought it best to run off, and it would have been easier to have left the body and fled."

"Apparently it would; but they had no idea that the fact of Desgrais's

presence at Ricœur's was known ; and they wished to get the body out of the inn."

" That can't be it, for they would not have left the place and disappeared."

" We do not know whether they intended to return or not, and I am obliged to confess that I am afraid we made a mistake in forcing our way into the inn. It would have been better had we watched the approaches carefully. The scoundrels would perhaps have returned, and have been caught like rats in a trap ; but now the alarm has been given."

" You have made a blunder, of course. Go on with your story."

" Well, if we admit that they did not go away without intending to return, everything must be otherwise explained. In order to get rid of the body, they must have carried it to the river or to some lonely street, and in doing this, have exposed themselves to the danger of being met and arrested by the watch ; whilst, thanks to their trick, they were able without any danger to penetrate the crowd assembled at the opera ball, lay down their burden, and escape, as you know."

Dubois was silent for a time, and his ferret-like face assumed a thoughtful expression, which was unusual with him. " Do you know, my friend," said he, at last, " that you reason remarkably well for a mere detective ? Now, how do you explain that daring paper fastened to the dagger which was left intentionally in the wound ? That seems to me useless imprudence on the part of the rascals."

" Monseigneur, it is exactly this defiance that leads me to believe that the murder is connected with the conspiracy led by La Jonquière. I unhesitatingly declare this to be the colonel's work. He never acts like other people who work in the dark. He, on the contrary, takes a pride in making his presence known by some bold stroke or other. He glories in fighting openly, and attacking the authorities of this kingdom as he would attack an enemy's troops in the open field."

" Did you come here, you scamp, to praise up this good-for-nothing fellow ? "

" No, monseigneur, for I have devoted myself, soul and body, to pursuing him, and there is a duel to the death between us ; but I think that in order to conquer an adversary, one ought to study him, and learn to do justice to his powers."

Dubois, in spite of his quarrelsome outbreaks, knew how to listen, and his extravagant behaviour did not prevent him from having considerable knowledge of human nature. He was struck with the clear views and calm decision which the replies of the detective evinced ; and although he willingly made use of him, he had never before appreciated him at his true value. " Listen," said he, looking keenly at him, " you seem to me to have sound judgment and must be a ready fellow. You think that you have got the scent of this incarnate fiend : follow it up. I give you leave to do exactly as you please, and if you succeed in delivering us from La Jonquière your fortune is made.

" I ask nothing better, monseigneur," replied the detective, " but I must be free from every other duty, and be able to devote myself entirely to the pursuit of the colonel."

" You shall be free. I will arrange the matter with Argenson, and from this moment I release you from your usual duties. Do not disturb yourself about the small fry, but keep after the big fish—"

" Thanks, monseigneur," replied Larfaille, who was sincerely pleased

with so great a proof of confidence. "Desgrais and I had determined, each on our own part, to get rid of the gang who disturb you so much. The poor fellow died in the attempt, but I am here, and with Heaven's help I will deliver you from those who killed him."

"Enough talking," said Dubois, who did not like pathos. "Have you found out anything besides what you discovered in the Rue Pierre-Lescot?"

"Yes, and yesterday, in the early part of the day, I came very near catching one of the rascals. I followed him for nearly an hour—"

"You missed him, you stupid fool!"

"He escaped by taking refuge in the Palais Royal, in the private apartments of the Regent."

At this astounding declaration Dubois dealt such a blow on his desk that he almost upset his inkstand. "Are you mad, or are you making game of me?" exclaimed he, rising in a furious rage. He would no doubt have given way to still greater excesses of language and gesture had not the door opened and admitted some one whom he did not expect—his master, the Duke of Orleans.

Philip of Orleans, Regent of France, who came thus familiarly to visit his prime minister, was not alone on this occasion. He brought with him a personage whose influence was almost equal to his own—John Law, the inventor of the "system," the director of the Royal Bank, and of the no less regal Mississippi Company, the great conqueror in finance and in love affairs. The Duke of Orleans and the Ace of Hearts, who were brought closely together by the fact that their views were the same in political economy, pleasure, luxury, and grandeur of all sorts, were living at that time in a sort of intimacy, and no morning passed without the fortunate Scotchman being called to some council of the Regency, and still more often was he summoned to private confabs in which other things besides interests of State were discussed. Dubois, who greatly admired Law's ingenious turn of mind, and had contributed largely to his rise, was almost always a third in these private interviews, which drove the grave Argenson and the punctilious Duke de Saint-Simon to despair. The Regent and his favourite seemed very gay on this particular morning. Philip, as he entered his minister's room, was laughing heartily at some anecdote which the new comptroller-general had been telling him, and which undoubtedly related to some gallant adventure. "Dubois will settle our difficulty," exclaimed the duke, "and I ask him to say whether it is possible for a flower-girl in the Rue Quincampoix to be handsomer than our most beautiful ladies at Versailles. Deuce take it! Law, you have too high an opinion of the products of your realm. Millions may be found there, but not Venuses."

Dubois, whom his master wished to make a judge of good looks, uttered a kind of groan instead of entering into the delicate discussion. "By Heaven! my lord," exclaimed he, "it must be confessed that you have chosen a pretty time to think of such nonsense. This is really no moment for discussing girls or marchionesses."

"There! there! don't be so vehement, Dubois, my friend," said the Regent, quickly. "What is the matter and why do you look so solemn?"

"What is the matter? Look here! ask this man, who can tell you better than I can what toils your enemies are weaving about you, while you are discussing the merits of flower-girls."

At the same time the minister seized Larfallie by the arm. The detective had taken refuge in a corner, whence Dubois dragged him up to the duke.

"Aha!" exclaimed Philip, "this is the same detective who so boldly promised us at the ball, the other night, to arrest the perpetrators of the bloody farce that was played there?"

"It is he, monseigneur, and he will tell you what they have been doing since their masquerade."

"Are they already captured?"

"Captured? oh no! You will soon be captured yourself if you don't take care. La Jonquière and his band, who did the act, are going boldly about Paris, and it even appears that you do them the honour to receive them in your private apartments."

"What stupid joke is this?"

"Come, speak out!" cried Dubois, rudely shaking the unlucky detective, who would have given a great deal to escape the honour of addressing the Regent. Philip of Orleans saw his confusion, and as he was naturally kind to his inferiors, he reassured him by a few words.

"Well, monseigneur," said Larfaille, "this is what occurred yesterday. I was with three detectives in the crowd in the Rue Quincampoix. I have reason to believe that some men who are in the plot associate with a young girl who sells flowers——"

"Tell me, Law, can this be your famous flower-girl, whose charms are so dazzling?"

"It is; and I know this detective very well; I have already employed him, and he has been of service to me."

"Good! good! You see, Dubois, that I am in the matter already, as this girl plays a part in the story which the man is telling us. Continue, my friend," added the Regent, addressing Larfaille.

"Well, monsigneur, I soon saw that I was not mistaken, for when M. Law said a few words to the young girl, I at once remarked a man in the crowd who seemed greatly annoyed at his doing so. His face was not unknown to me, but I could not tell exactly where I had seen it, and I would swear that he is one of La Jonquière's companions. I then thought of a trick which I believed certain of success. As soon as M. Law went into the offices of the Mississippi Company I thought of carrying off the young girl by force, feeling sure that her admirer would defend her, and thus give me a chance to arrest him."

"Oho!" said the Regent, frowning. "That seems to me too violent a measure. I do not approve of it."

"You will never understand what the police is," exclaimed Dubois. "Do not say anything, but let me act as I please."

"But, monseigneur," began Law at this, "I assure you that the flower-girl is well worth carrying off."

"Then you are responsible for these barbarous proceedings which Dubois thinks quite natural? But let me hear the rest of the story."

"All was going on well, monseigneur," resumed the detective. "Our man had called a tall fellow of rather fine appearance to his aid, but we had surrounded them, and we should have caught them, to a certainty, had not a commissary come up who spoilt our game."

"What! he ought to have helped you," grumbled Dubois.

"Of course, but although I whispered in his ear that I was a detective acting under orders from my superiors he would not hear me, but instead of helping me told me to release the young girl and her two defenders. I was obliged to yield, and was lucky in not being cut to pieces, for he had excited the crowd against me."

"The rascal ! the scamp ! the villain !" howled Dubois. "I'll bet that it was that ass of an Argenson who picked him out ! And you, you brute, you deserve to be sent to the galleys for being fooled like that."

"Monseigneur, I was not able to win the game, but I did not give it up. The idea occurred to me that the man might be a false commissary, and I followed him."

"You did well. What did you find out ?"

"I saw that I had guessed correctly, and that the man only wore the robes of a magistrate, for he got into a coach behind which I got up, and after half an hour he left it, dressed as an officer."

"You then threw yourself upon him of course ?"

"Ah ! I should not have failed to do that had it been possible, but I have come to a circumstance which greatly surprised you, just now. This false magistrate, instead of getting out at the Châtelet or at the Palais de Justice, left his coach at the door of—"

"At whose door ? Finish, you rascal !"

"I have already told you, monseigneur ; at the door of the staircase which leads to the Regent's private apartments in the Palais Royal."

"And he went in ?"

"Immediately, without being stopped by the Swiss who stood at the door."

"Ah ! this is too much, and—"

"I will add, monseigneur, that I wished to follow him, and the same Swiss was very surly and threatened me with his halberd. He finally drove me away with shameful rudeness."

Larfaille looked so piteous when he came to the end of his story that the Duke of Orleans could not refrain from bursting out into a laugh. Law joined him, but Dubois, on the contrary, flew into a rage which baffled description. "Yes, laugh ! laugh ! monseigneur !" cried he, stammering, "laugh as much as you like, for it is really very amusing. A scoundrel wishes to kill you, and enters your rooms as freely as if he were going into a windmill. Who knows but that the scoundrel was La Jonquière himself ? He is said to be very clever at disguising himself ! Besides, as he scatters Spanish gold by the handful, he has undoubtedly bribed your servants, who will always be quite disposed to open every door to him, so that there is nothing now to prevent him from killing you whenever he likes in your apartments at the Palais Royal, and going away as undisturbed as he came. By Heaven ! it must be confessed that you are a very prudent prince and a well-guarded Regent."

During this discourse, Philip of Orleans had held his sides with laughter, and this proof of indifference so exasperated Dubois that he began to run about the room like a madman, overthrowing the chairs in his rage, without the least thought either of his own or his master's dignity. Larfaille, in consternation, prayed Heaven to keep him from the Bastille, which he feared would be all the reward he should get for his services. "But do you not see," at last said the Regent to his infuriated minister, "that this poor fellow has imagined all this ? Fatigue and the excitement of the night before had undoubtedly upset his brain, and he really believes what was purely imaginary."

"Monseigneur," ventured Larfaille, "I am used to fatigue and excitement ; I was as calm yesterday as I am to-day, and I saw what I have just stated."

"Then, my friend, you must have mistaken one coach for another."

"That is impossible, monseigneur. I got up behind the carriage as soon as the false magistrate entered into it, and I did not leave it for an instant."

The assurance with which he spoke finally impressed the duke, who began to reflect. "Wait a moment," said he, striking his forehead. "At what time do you say this man went to the Palais Royal?"

"Yesterday morning, at ten."

"Good! What does he look like?"

"He is tall, but bent, and he leans upon a cane; he has a coat of military cut, a bandage over his eyes, and his arm in a sling."

"Ah! now I remember," exclaimed the Regent: "that is my old comrade in the army of Italy, Commander Angelo Baroni."

"What, monseigneur, do you know this man?" exclaimed Larfaille, forgetting etiquette so far as to address a question to the Regent.

"I should say that I did," replied the duke, "and I have known him for twenty years, at least. He commanded one of Albergotti's battalions that fought with us at Turin, and he was wounded in the arm then, as well as myself. I lost sight of him in 1706; he left the service and retired to his estates in Piedmont, but he seems to have found it very dull there, so he has come to visit France; and being in Paris he did not fail to visit me. I was charmed to find an old comrade, and I always receive him with the greatest pleasure."

"There must be some misunderstanding, monseigneur," stammered the detective, who could not get over hearing the Regent of France declare himself the friend of a man belonging to the colonel's gang.

"Come!" resumed Philip of Orleans, "tell me something more about the appearance of the man who came to my rooms yesterday at ten. Didn't he wear high boots, a blue frock coat, and a three-cornered hat set on one side?"

"Yes, monseigneur, and a knot of yellow ribbons hanging over his left shoulder."

"It was he, then, my dear Baroni, and if he conspires against me, I will agree to give up my regency to M. du Maine."

Larfaille, in amazement, could not find a word to say, and yet he had seen, and was sure of having seen, this old comrade of the duke's in a coach with the suspected commissary, or else he and the commissary were one. Meantime, Dubois had suddenly quieted down, and had listened with the greatest attention to both the questions and answers. When the dialogue ended in a formal assurance on the duke's part, the terrible Secretary of State went up to the detective, seized him by one of his coat-buttons, and cried out: "Are you making game of us, you scamp! to tell us your visions? Do you think that you are paid for taking the moon for a green cheese, and an invalid officer for a commissary?"

"Monseigneur," said Larfaille, firmly, "I saw what I say—nothing more, nothing less—and I stick to my report."

His look was so bold, his bearing so resolute, that Dubois let go of him and began to pace up and down the room. Every one has his own way of thinking, and with Dubois, hasty motion was always an indication of deep thought. "Baroni! Commander Angelo Baroni," growled he, striding along: "who is he? Some other adventurer, of course. Italy does not send us anything else."

"Easy, easy!" said Philip of Orleans, "speak with more respect for my old friend."

"What does your old friend come to the Palais Royal for?"

"To see me, of course, and talk over our campaigns?"

"Nothing but your campaigns?"

"You are very curious, but, as you wish to know everything, learn, then, that the commander is thoroughly versed in a great many sciences which deeply interest me."

"Ah, now we are coming to it!" exclaimed the minister. "I'll venture to say that this intriguing fellow has persuaded you that he knows the secret of the 'Philosopher's Stone,' and that you receive him in your laboratory, and under pretext of making gold he gets a great deal of money out of you."

"You are wrong. Baroni leaves all that to quacks, and his science goes beyond blowing away at a furnace."

"Great powers! has he invented a new system of finance?" asked Law, with an ironical grimace.

"Better than that. He can call up the fiend." *

If Satan had suddenly appeared with his horns, the Secretary of State could not have sprung up more hurriedly than he did, when he heard this declaration on the part of the prince. Law, quite as incredulous, but more master of himself, contented himself with smiling. Larfaille, who had quietly retired into a corner, listened for what was coming. "What is the matter with you all?" resumed the Regent; "and why is it so astonishing that I should wish to see the fiend if my friend the commander can show him to me?"

"And where is this learned man going to give you a specimen of his talents?" demanded Dubois, with a very serious face.

"Oh, you may easily imagine that it won't be in my apartments or yours. M. Beelzebub does not like places where politics prevail. Still less does he like suppers, for he does not willingly mingle with those who work for him. Besides, if he consented, I should oppose it, for Nocé would have an indigestion, and the marchioness would die of fear."

"Good! then it will be in a cavern, I suppose?"

"The place is not yet found, nor the day, or rather the night, but Baroni told me yesterday that he thought he would be able to operate at the first new moon, at the bottom of an old quarry."

"Shall you go there?"

"I shall certainly go, and I'll take you with me, if you like."

"I am obliged to you, but I am in no hurry to see the fiend."

"Especially as you are sure of doing so in ten or twenty years from now, at most."

"Jest as much as you like, monseigneur! Now that I know all about this Baroni, I will keep a watch over him and lodge him in some other place than a deserted quarry."

"Don't do that, or I shall be seriously angry. Watch La Jonquière as much as you like; but I forbid you to annoy the commander. He is the only man who has entertained me since I became Regent."

"We shall see whether he will amuse you in the end," growled Dubois.

"Is it possible, monseigneur, that you have faith in such sorcery?"

* It is a genuine historical fact that Philip of Orleans, the Regent, like many of his contemporaries, fully believed in witchcraft and in the possibility of summoning the fiend from Hades. The many statements on the subject contained in the memoirs of the time leave no doubt upon the point.

asked Law, who believed that two and two make four, and nothing besides.

“ Bah ! ” said the Regent, “ I have not absolute faith in it, you know, but it amuses me, and if you but knew how dull I am ! Besides, I have seen very strange things of this kind in former days.”

“ What ! really, monseigneur, you have seen—”

“ Not his satanic majesty. But in 1706, a few days before I left for the Italian campaign, at that poor Louise de Sérÿ’s—I was with Baroni, whom I had become acquainted with six or seven years before through Mirepoix, who died in 1699, and who was a second-lieutenant in the Black Musketeers and also dabbled with magic. Well, the commander, whom I took with me to Madame d’Argenton’s, suggested he should show me what would happen when the King died.”

“ And did he keep his promise ? ”

“ You shall see. Louise had with her a young girl who was born in the place, and who had, consequently, no knowledge of the court. Baroni took a glass of pure water, made a few passes over it, and uttered certain words ; then he told the child to look at it, and say what she saw.”

“ That is mere jugglery ! ” growled Dubois.

“ Good ! do the same if you can, and let me finish my story. The girl looked for some time without seeing anything, and then, all of a sudden, she gave vent to an exclamation, and began to describe to us the King’s chamber at Versailles, doing so with perfect accuracy, though she had never seen it.”

“ Who knows ? Besides, other people had seen it, and could easily have told her all about it.”

“ Wait ! that is not all. She spoke of seeing the King in his bed, Madame de Maintenon in a corner weeping or pretending to weep, Fagon bending over his long cane, and all who were there, in fact, when the King died, nine years after.”

“ That is all stuff ! ”

“ Stuff if you like, but the strangest thing of all was that she described a boy who wore a blue ribbon, and whom the King kissed.”

“ His Majesty Louis XV.,” muttered Law.

“ Himself, and easily to be recognised by her description. Now, observe that all this took place in 1706, and that his present Majesty was not born till four years later, in 1710. But this is not all. When she had done speaking, when she had said that she saw me whom she was in the habit of seeing daily at Madame d’Argenton’s, I was surprised that she did not mention Monseigneur the Dauphin, or the Duke of Burgundy, or the Duchess of Burgundy, or the Duke of Berry, and I asked her if she did not see their faces. She always repeated that she did not. I could not understand it. Subsequent events showed why it was. This was in 1706. All of these four persons were then in full health, and all four died before the King, who expired in 1715. What do you say to that, my incredulous gentlemen ? ”

“ I say,” replied Dubois, unhesitatingly, “ that this Baroni is a skilful impostor, and you are a madman to listen to him.”

“ Insults are not reasoning.”

“ Propose to him to repeat the experiment again before us, and to tell us where we shall all three be when the King comes of age, four years hence.”

“ Bah ! that would be very easy to predict. I shall be on the road to

my estate at Villers-Cotterets, where I shall retire as soon as I can get rid of the Regency ; you will probably be in Hades ; and as for Law, he will either be Emperor of Mississippi, or exiled somewhere."

"Good ! but meantime, monseigneur, beware of your commander. But I shall very soon find out all about him."

Philip of Orleans was, no doubt, about to protest against Dubois' strange assumption, when the door opened, and Coche, his head valet appeared and handed him a rose-coloured note. "Oh !" said the Regent, after glancing at the perfumed missive, "the marchioness is waiting for me in my apartments. What can she have to say ? She is not usually up so early." Then, after hesitating a moment, he added : "I will go to her. One should never make a woman wait. Law, I leave you to talk politics with this maniac, Dubois, who wants to arrest everybody in Paris. Calm him, if possible, and give my compliments to the pretty flower girl in the Rue Quincampoix."

This said, the Duke of Orleans turned upon his red heels, and went towards the door, which his valet flung wide open. However, before going out, he stopped, and addressing Larfaillé, who stood close to the wall, said with a laugh : "As for you, my good fellow, I advise you not to lose your time in following old soldiers who come to see me early in the morning, but keep after the scoundrels who assassinated your comrade, and who spoiled all my pleasure the other night. If you catch them I will give you a hundred louis myself."

The detective bowed respectfully, and had not yet straightened himself up when Dubois, no longer restrained by the presence of the prince, went hurriedly up to him and said : "Come now ! and let us speak seriously. You are not in the way, M. Law ; indeed you are as much interested as I am in ending with this La Jonquière, for if he succeeded in his enterprise against the Regent, I think that the people of Paris, who neither like you or me, would soon hang us."

"Perhaps," coolly replied the Scotchman, "but we will prevent this terrible fellow from succeeding."

"Not so easily as you think, but we will try, and, to begin, let us understand one another as to the means of doing so. You, my friend, you say that you are sure of having seen an officer get out of the coach which a commissary entered ?"

"Absolutely sure, monseigneur, as I am also sure that the man was not a commissary."

"Then, this pretended Commander Baroni is acquainted with the band, if not a member of it himself."

"However," remarked Law, "the details that the Duke of Orleans has just given us are very precise, and he is so sure of this man, whom he has known for twenty years, that——"

"What does that prove ? Nothing, less than nothing ! The scamp served with him in Italy, no doubt ; but nevertheless, since that famous campaign, he may have gone over to the enemy. He amuses the Regent with his magic, and the duke is too good-natured to see any deceit in all that, and will allow himself to be ensnared to some out-of-the-way place if I do not take care. But be easy as to that. When the Italian next appears at the Palais Royal, he shall be shown in and treated with the greatest politeness, but he will be waited for in the street and quietly followed when he goes out, and not lost sight of till everything is known as to his life in Paris. I will give orders as to all that, but, unfortunately,

that's not enough. It is La Jonquière whom I want, La Jonquière is the man ; and it is upon you that I rely to capture him," said Dubois, laying his hand familiarly on the detective's shoulder.

"I shall do my best, monseigneur," replied Larfaille.

"I do not doubt that ; have you any settled plan ?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Tell me what it is."

"Monseigneur," resumed Larfaille, "I did not succeed yesterday in capturing the suspicious defender—as I consider him—of the flower girl ; but at all events, I saw his face very closely and his features are impressed upon my mind. I am positive of recognizing him, if I meet him again, and I hope to do so near the inn of the Epée de Bois."

"What kind of a place is this Epée de Bois ?"

"It is a tavern near the Rue Quincampoix in the Allée de Venise, and a great place for stock-brokers."

"I have heard of it," said Law ; "one of my head brokers, Abraham, the Jew, does a great deal of business there of evenings."

"The inn," resumed Larfaille, "is kept by this girl's father, a man from Flanders, named Blanche-Barbe."

"You know all about him, I suppose !"

"Yes, monseigneur, but I have learned nothing of consequence. He came to Paris a long time ago, with his wife and daughter, who was then a child. He must have had some money, as he bought the house where he lives. His business has always been a prosperous one. Apparently he is above suspicion, yet I have many reasons for thinking that he is bound to the conspiracy of La Jonquière by ties which I cannot find out."

"It is your fault if you cannot. What prevents you from taking twenty men belonging to the watch, and bursting into this fellow's place and searching every nook in it ?"

"That would be spoiling our own game. We should find nothing, for Blanche-Barbe is not such a fool as to keep material proofs of his complicity in his house ; and, besides, we should alarm the whole gang, who would at once take flight. If you will allow me, I shall use other means. For instance, I will devote all my time to watching the tavern."

"Take care that you do not meet with the same fate as befell your comrade, Desgrais, in the inn at the Rue Pierre-Lescot."

"Desgrais was brave but imprudent, monseigneur, and in our business caution is essential. If he had taken better precautions as to his disguise he would not have come to grief."

"Then you intend to disguise yourself to watch these fellows ?"

"Yes, my lord, and you may trust me. I know how to manage all sorts of disguises, and I might be face to face with the false magistrate without being recognised by him."

"That is right ! And what will you do in your new character ?"

"I shall look, listen, and may be I shall obtain some indications ; but that is not my main hope, and in order to succeed I must ask you, monseigneur, to give me a blank order of arrest, with the authorisation to use public force—"

"As regards La Jonquière and his accomplices ? That is easy done."

"And also the flower-girl, my lord."

"Ah, you wish that, too, it seems ?"

"Yes, for it is only through her that we shall be able to force her lover to show himself. If he is about when the girl is captured, he will

attempt to oppose this act of violence, and then things will not end as they did yesterday. We shall be in force and will seize him. If, on the contrary, the abduction takes place when he is absent, he will not fail to come soon enough, prowling about the Hôpital-Général, for I shall spread the rumour that the young damsel has been taken there, and thus he will run into the wolf's mouth."

"That is very well planned; but the father, your suspicious tavern-keeper, you do not seem to take him into account? He will raise a great outcry, and who knows what he may do? He may demand his daughter from the Regent, who, with his mania for listening to all sorts of people and doing justice to everybody, is quite capable of restoring her to him."

"Monseigneur, the inquiries which I have made about Master Blanche-Barbe result in showing that he is not a very tender father, and does not care for his daughter. But, besides, I do not think it necessary to shut the girl up in the hospital."

"Where the deuce do you mean to take her? To the India Company's offices?" asked Dubois, looking at Law, who began to laugh and make gestures of protest.

"You know, monseigneur," resumed Larfaille, "that, for a month past, there has been a general clearing out of vagabonds and unknown persons of both sexes, who are sent under careful escort to Brest, and thence to Louisiana."

"So as to colonise our magnificent lands near the Mississippi," said the inventor of the "system." "That is an excellent idea which originated with me."

"And which may serve us in catching this *La Jonquière*," added the minister. "My man, I approve of your idea, but I recommend the avoidance of scandal in carrying it out. I have heard of poor people making a great outcry about these abductions, and you must have a good excuse for what you do in order to avoid being mobbed."

"The girl's business will serve as a pretext, monseigneur. A young girl who goes about alone, selling flowers in the streets, exposes herself to being treated unceremoniously by the head of the watch, and if I am obliged to resort to this extreme measure everything will be done in the quietest way in the world."

"You have an answer to everything, and you are a man of resources," said Dubois, taking from his desk a paper to which his seal and signature were affixed. "I will write at once to Argenson, to give you full liberty of action. Go, and don't return till you bring me *La Jonquière* and all his gang as captives."

Larfaille took the paper, bowed down to the ground, and departed. "By-the-by," called out the minister, as he was going out of the door, "don't lose your time in watching Signor Baroni. I'll take care of him myself."

V.

THE Chevalier Louis du Terne de Grandpré was not a conspirator to be confounded with the collection of people of all sorts commanded by Colonel *La Jonquière*.

These did not differ greatly from those unclassed people among whom conspirators are usually found—men steeped in crime, or reduced to

impecuniosity. La Jonquière, who did not aim at killing the Regent, but at carrying him off to the King of Spain, was obliged to make himself the leader of a gang, and, as such, to seek accomplices here and there wherever he had most chance of finding them—that is to say, among the military men discharged from service. The peace signed at Rastadt in 1714, after thirteen years' bitter strife, in which half of Europe had taken part, threw out upon the world a great many officers, subalterns, and soldiers, all accustomed to live by arms, and unacquainted with any other mode of procuring a livelihood. Those who did not turn Turks like M. de Bonneval—who died a pasha, after having successively served the King of France and the Emperor of Germany—willingly enrolled themselves in the plot against the Duke of Orleans, which the Prince de Cellamare laid in the early days of the Regency. This attempt having, as is well known, proved a failure, those who escaped the Bastille and galleys tried to find some other use for their talents. La Jonquière, who knew them all, or almost all, had only to choose from among them. After as well as before his failure in the Bois de Boulogne, he had only to look about him to find two or three dozen good-for-nothing fellows ready for anything, provided there were pistoles to pay them with. There were gentlemen who had lost caste in his troop, like the Cavaliere Lorenzo de Mille, who was of a noble Piedmont family, and had been captain in a German regiment. There were *anspessades* on half pay, poor fellows from the lowest ranks in the army, checked in their progress by peace, and who had passed over, bag and baggage, into the camp of “irregulars.” There were mercenary soldiers who were half bandits, and who had been discharged also, and who served the colonel because he paid them well, but who, if nothing better offered, were equally ready to join the numerous bands of robbers which were then ravaging Paris and its environs. La Jonquière, who knew how to deal with rascals, maintained these fellows with money, and checked them with fear. He was always ready to hand them gold or to blow out their brains, as might be necessary. But he had very little faith in their fidelity, and had long been on the look-out for a more devoted and disinterested lieutenant. Shortly after he escaped from the Bastille chance threw in his way a young man to whom he had formerly done a great service. One evening, in Brussels, the Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré, who then commanded a company in the Walloon Guards, had been assailed in a lonely street by three cut-throats, who tried to kill him in order to steal his purse. The colonel came up by chance, having just left a den where he had gambled away all his money. He was in an execrable humour, and eagerly seized the chance thus offered him for a fight. He charged at the robbers, stretched one of them at his feet, beat off the two others, who finally got away, and, after this exploit, he exchanged vows of undying friendship with M. de Grandpré. He even took advantage of the opportunity to borrow sixty louis of him, which he still owed him when he met him face to face in Paris, in the gardens of the Palais Royal, one day in December of 1719. He had just escaped from prison, and did not show himself except carefully disguised, so that the chevalier would not have recognised him had he not told him his name. When he went up to this old but somewhat forgotten friend, the colonel had an idea of his own. He began by refunding the sixty louis, after which he inquired with interest how Terne's affairs were progressing.

Terne had much to complain of. The Emperor of Germany had given him his discharge, when, on the contrary, he had hoped for advancement.

He had come to Paris with letters of recommendation to some noblemen who stood well at the Court, such as the Prince de Chimay and the Count de Croix ; he hoped through them to be able to enter the French army with the rank he had previously held. But for six months he had solicited this position, and had met with obstinate refusals from the Duke of Orleans, who ended by plainly declaring to the chevalier's protectors that the King did not wish to employ an officer who had been discharged by the Emperor. He added, besides, that when a man successively served two masters he was not more faithful to the second than to the first, and that there were good reasons for mistrusting foreigners. This remark, reported to the chevalier, wounded him deeply, and La Jonquière found the soil ready for sowing the seed of revenge. He told Terne all his plans, showed him a colonel's brevet signed in blank by the King of Spain, and swore that he had full power to fill it in with the name of the Chevalier de Grandpré, if the said chevalier would help him to carry off the Regent.

Terne, it must be confessed, did not need much persuasion to consent. He was young and ambitious ; he found his military career interrupted, and he was reduced to leading an obscure life on the remnants of the small fortune left him by his father. Besides, in those days a gentleman had much less scruple in placing his sword at the service of a foreign country than is now the case. The chevalier, therefore, ardently seized upon the idea of carrying his sword to Spain, and staking everything upon the colonel's venture. In placing himself at La Jonquière's disposal he made but one reservation, and that was entirely to his own honour : he declared that he did not wish to accept money, preferring to conspire at his own expense to being confounded with the crowd of conspirators bought over by high wages. As may be believed, the colonel made no difficulty about accepting the offer of this disinterested lieutenant. The treaty was concluded at once, and scrupulously kept on both sides. The colonel was careful never to ask Terne to do anything which he would have disliked doing. It was understood that the chevalier only owed his active assistance in the Regent's abduction, and not in any low or criminal acts. When there was a spy to be got rid of, or anything else of the same sort, La Jonquière set his second lieutenant, Lorenzo de Mille, at work, and the Italian had no scruples whatever. Terne was only called upon on occasions when there was a chance of carrying out the great scheme—as, for example, on the night of the opera ball, when there had been some hope of seizing upon the person of the Regent. Besides this he was only required to go at night to confer with the colonel in the obscure retreat which Master Blanche-Barbe placed at the disposal of the conspirators. This obligation did not weigh upon the chevalier, for it furnished him with an excuse for passing through the tavern of the Epée de Bois, where he was almost sure of meeting Violet.

How had he fallen in love with a tavern-keeper's daughter, whom he would scarcely have looked at in former days ? It may be said that love cares nothing for social distinctions, and is a greater leveller than laws in favour of equality ; but it must be confessed also that Terne's dull, isolated life had much to do with it. Kept almost all day long in the humble lodging which he had taken under a false name in the Marais, dissatisfied with the past, anxious as to the present, and uncertain as to the future, the chevalier was in the best possible frame of mind for falling seriously in love. A suffering heart easily turns to hope, and at twenty-five hope consists in loving and being loved. Terne loved Violet, not at first sight, as in novels, where love is lightning-like, but slowly, little by little, without

intending and almost without knowing it. Introduced by the colonel to Blanche-Barbe, and initiated into the mysteries of the inn, Terne saw the young girl, and at first merely remarked that she was wonderfully beautiful. Then he realised the penetrating charm of her sweet and simple words, the ineffable sweetness of her voice, and the natural grace of her whole person. Then, too, he began to interest himself about the exquisite creature born in so humble a station, just as a primrose may be sown by the wind upon a thatched roof. And soon he began to ask himself why, out of Violet's poverty and his own misfortunes, he, a nobleman without any estate, and a captain without a company, should not endeavour to make happiness for both. He was in this position when the scene in the Rue Quincampoix took place, and revealed to him that he loved her more than he was aware. The mere idea that Law might begin his pursuit again set him wild, and if he had been free he would have sought an opportunity for insulting the insolent Scotchman in such a way as would make bloodshed the only possible reparation ; but he was conspiring, and a conspirator must respect his position as a conspirator, just as a nobleman must not forget his nobility. To attack the all-powerful Comptroller-General of Finance, the Regent's favourite, personally, would have meant compromising the interests of the colonel. Terne was therefore obliged to restrain himself till the day of triumph should come, a day which he hoped was near at hand. But after the danger which the young girl had incurred, he could not hesitate. He must either renounce his love or manifest it, for events might hasten on so as to force him to leave France.

The time has come for deciding. His situation with regard to Violet has become intolerable, since Master Blanche-Barbe had taken it into his head to condemn his daughter to mend linen for a living, and Terne had not the courage to suffer the loved one of his heart to pass her days in mending stockings in the open air, and her evenings in waiting upon the customers at the Epée de Bois. The most ardent passion cannot bear certain ridiculous situations, and the poor chevalier saw himself reduced to courting a beauty seated at a street stall, and obliged to wait to declare his passion to her till she should have finished darning a hole ; besides standing side by side with a lackey or common soldier when he wished to speak to her. These scruples had never arisen when she was selling flowers to everybody, and yet the condition of a flower-girl was not much higher than that of a mender of linen. But the heart has its prejudices. Terne thought that the time had come for taking that solemn step, a declaration, as yet unuttered, and committing himself completely in the hope of obtaining an avowal or a promise—a promise especially, for he counted upon the avowal ; but he did not intend to conform to custom in asking Master Blanche-Barbe and Dame Margot for their daughter's hand. This would have been too much for his pride, and, besides, he foresaw that the innkeeper would refuse him. He seemed to be a surly clown, ill-disposed towards gentlemen. The chevalier, however, had no intention of approaching Violet in a light manner, or of misleading her. What he intended to do was, as he had told Count de Horn, to take her up behind him on his horse, to gallop with her to the frontier behind the carriage which would convey the Regent as a prisoner to Spain, and to marry her beyond the Pyrenees. So bold a plan, to be approved of by her whom it concerned, must at least be explained to her, and this is what the chevalier resolved to do on the morrow of the day when he had the good fortune to save the bouquet-seller from the claws of the detectives.

He had not seen La Jonquière since the latter's timely appearance in the robes of a magistrate, although after that lucky encounter he had remained for forty-eight hours in his room, whither, as a rule, the colonel came every day in some disguise or other, to talk with him about the incidents of the day before and the plans of the morrow. Terne, therefore, made up his mind to go at nightfall to the Allée de Venise, where poor Violet was freezing at her stand, and have a decisive talk with her; then to go into Master Blanche-Barbe's tavern, where he was almost sure of meeting La Jonquière, who never failed to pass an hour or two in the tavern before going stealthily up stairs to his men assembled on the first floor. So far, the chevalier, who had never mingled with the conspirators except by chance, and who was not known to the head of police, had not taken the precaution to disguise himself. But the squabble in the Rue Quincampoix had put him upon his guard, and he thought fit, if not to disfigure himself by putting on some grotesque toggery, at least to modify his usual dress a little. He gave up the tight velvet coat, the brocaded satin vest, the silk stockings, the hat with Spanish point lace, and the delicate court-sword with a gilt hilt, to put on a brown serge suit, which made him look like some mercer's son. It was not without a sigh that he resigned himself, at the moment when he saw that he must have a decisive interview with Violet, to giving up his elegant cavalier's dress for this sorry outfit. One can never gaily renounce the opportunity of appearing well-clad before the object of one's heart's affection and choose an unbecoming garb instead. However, the situation was too serious for Terne to think of vanity. He therefore left his lodgings dressed as a mere citizen, and went his way towards the Rue Quincampoix, bravely covering his buckleless shoes with mud and trying to imitate the gait of the clowns whom he met, in which attempt he did not, however, succeed. He arrived at the entrance of the Allée de Venise just as the bell was ringing to announce that the stock market had closed. A crowd of open-air speculators was pouring forth from every exit, slowly and reluctantly it seemed, for the day had been one of hot contest, and many fortunes had been lost and made since the morning. It was the time when the brokers were about to repair to a certain inn beyond the tavern kept by Master Blanche-Barbe, to settle their accounts, and night would soon fall and relieve Violet from her pitiable position at the stall. The chevalier had not a moment to lose if he wished to talk with her alone. He made all haste, and his heart beat high when he came near to the poor girl, caged in her wooden prison, bending over her work, which she attended to courageously in spite of the cold which made her hands tremble, and the wind which reddened her cheeks. By good luck she was alone, and Terne blessed Heaven for having spared him the humiliation of meeting one of her customers. He came up so softly that the young girl did not hear him, and he was obliged to cough slightly to announce his presence. Violet made a petulant gesture, thinking it was some one bringing her fresh work that would force her to remain still longer at her post, but she recognised Terne under his modest garb and blushed with joy. "Is it you, chevalier?" said she, in her harmonious and penetrating voice, which sounded like a lark's song. And then, with a smile, she added: "Ah, how strange you look!"

"Yes, I look like a rustic," said the young gentleman with a somewhat forced laugh. "I am obliged to be careful since the affair of the day before yesterday. Those rascals who were so rude to you belong,

I believe, to M. d'Argenson, and I do not wish to be recognised by them."

"Yes, yes, we must avoid that," said Violet, quickly; "but I have not thanked you yet for having saved me. Ah! that is not because I have not thought of you, chevalier."

"Is that true, Violet?" said Terne, glad to profit by this opening to begin his courtship. "Is it possible that I have been present in your remembrance?"

"Did you doubt it?" asked the young girl, fixing her large, soft blue eyes upon his face.

"I did not dare to hope it, Violet, but, as you think of me, that shows that you love me a little; and I also love you," exclaimed the chevalier, whom this beginning had so far encouraged as to determine him to make the long-thought-of declaration.

"You love me!" said Violet, without blushing at this sudden demonstration. "Oh, so much the better, chevalier, for I love you, too."

The heart is sometimes captious, like the mind, and Terne's was not fully satisfied with this reply, which, a quarter of an hour before, he would scarcely have dared to hope for. Why? He would, perhaps, have been unable to say, but he felt it very clearly.

He did not so mistake the young girl as to attribute her calmness to the fact that she was habituated to hearing ardent protestations of love; but he thought that she expressed herself in a very off-hand manner at a moment when their fate was about to be decided. He was obliged to confess that she could not have spoken in a different tone if she had said: "You are fond of strawberries! so am I."

His disappointment was so legible in his face that Violet said to him, softly: "What is the matter, chevalier? Have I offended you? It was unintentionally."

Terne started, and said, in an agitated tone: "Listen to me, Violet. I came here to tell you the love I feel for you, and you have just replied three words which went direct to my heart. You have said, 'I love you.'"

"And I say so again, chevalier, because it is true—it is true, I swear it to you," interrupted the girl, with childlike earnestness.

"You say so, and I believe it, but—"

"But what?"

"Do you know what it is to love?"

"To love?" repeated Violet, looking at Terne with astonished eyes; "is it not to be thinking ever of one alone, and hoping to behold him, and to feel that one would die for his sake?"

"Yes, Violet, yes, that is love; and it is thus that I love you."

"And you have already proved it, for, the day before yesterday, to snatch me from those wretches, you exposed yourself and ran the risk of being wounded or killed. I am but a woman, and have neither strength nor courage, but I pray Heaven every evening to grant me the happiness of devoting myself for your sake."

"Violet, some day, possibly to-morrow, I may be forced to leave Paris, to quit France."

The young girl turned pale, put her hand to her heart, and murmured: "That would kill me."

This time the chevalier's heart swelled with happiness. He took Violet's hand, pressed it to his lips, and said, with emotion, which he did not

attempt to conceal : " You will not die, for we shall never leave one another. You shall not die, for you must be my wife."

" Your wife ?" exclaimed the young girl, with something like terror ; " I, your wife, chevalier ?"

" Yes, Violet. Henceforth my life is bound up with your own. When I am obliged to leave France, which may soon occur, for I am nearing the end of a perilous venture, I shall come to remind you that we have promised one another never to part, and I shall say to you : ' Come ! ' We will fly together, and as soon as we cross the frontier, I swear to you upon my honour as a gentleman, that a priest shall marry us to each other."

While Terne was speaking Violet turned pale, and her eyes filled with tears. " Farewell, my lovely dream !" muttered she, hanging her head.

" What do you mean ?" exclaimed the chevalier. " Do you doubt my word ? You do not answer. Do you wish to drive me to despair ?"

" Alas ! chevalier, what you ask is impossible."

" Impossible ! Why ?"

" Because a poor girl like myself cannot marry the Chevalier de Grandpré."

" Ah, Violet," exclaimed Terne, " if you love me you would not say that. What does your birth matter if I choose to overlook it ? Besides, the distance is not so great between us. I am of noble family, it is true, but the King would not take me into his carriage—although I have a right to ride in it—for I have neither estates nor dignities, nor position, as I am barely subsisting upon the remains of a small fortune left me by my father, and am but a poor discharged captain. Your father, I believe, was formerly a citizen of Liège and must be rich. A rich citizen like him is as good as a poor noble like me."

The young girl listened to this reasoning with downcast eyes, and made no haste to reply. " Pardon me, chevalier," said she, at last, " if I do not understand all these nice distinctions. I only know that I am not free to dispose of myself."

" Well, then, since you exact it, I will speak to Master Blanche-Barbe. I will tell him that we are betrothed, and ask his consent to our marriage."

" That would be useless," replied Violet ; " he would refuse it."

" And you have not the courage to do without it ? Must I give you up ? Ah ! I was right in saying that you do not love me, for you have never loved me."

" Alas ! I love none but you, and I would joyfully give you my life, but I had thought of another kind of happiness."

" What kind of happiness had you dreamed of ?"

" That I should continue to see you, hear your voice, and see by your face whether you were glad or sad, and that I should be glad or sad with you ; I dreamed that I might adore you in my obscurity, just as when I was a child—from the threshold of our little rustic home—I used to worship the star of eve as it gleamed above the beech-trees in the forest."

This poetic language from the lips of a child was new to the chevalier, and, it must be confessed, that his soldierly life had not prepared him for appreciating it. The ex-captain of the Walloon Guards thought it only the over-sentimentality of a young girl who was ignorant of the world and its inexorable necessities. " Violet," replied he, in a firm tone, " these are but dreams that will fly away and return no more if you refuse to leave France with me, for then you would see me no more. I am but a soldier of fortune accustomed to go straight to my aim, and I love you honestly

and seriously. I can but give you my faith and ask your own in return."

"Mine! that is all yours; and if you doubt it, chevalier, do with me as you please. Rather than lose you I will go anywhere you may choose to take me. I will leave home and risk being cursed by my parents; but my father has always told me that I am but a child of the people, and that noblemen do not stoop to us, or that, if they do, it is a misfortune. My father has a hatred of all men of rank."

"The deuce he has!" exclaimed Terne. "I did not suspect Master Blanche-Barbe of hating gentlemen so heartily, but this is good to know, and I shall tell it to the colonel. He is very careful to keep you away from the chance of being approached by noblemen, it must be said, for he lets you sell flowers in the street, and now he forces you to listen to the gallantries of common soldiers and lackeys. This is strange conduct for a father who loves his child, and pretends to be so solicitous about her!"

"My father does not love me," replied Violet, lowering her voice; "he hates me."

"What makes you think so? I admit that he is extremely harsh with you, but I did not know—"

"He hates me, chevalier, and I have had many proofs that he does."

"But why—why this monstrous feeling?"

"Alas! that is the mystery."

"I must find out what it is before we fly together, for if I discovered—"

"Jeanneton, come here!" just then called out Master Pierre, who had appeared upon the threshold of the tavern.

When the chevalier recognised this voice growling out in the midst of his love-making, like a peal of thunder on a fine summer evening, he started, and turned round furiously. Violet also felt an electric shock, but the effect upon her was different. She trembled from head to foot, and began to obey without a murmur, or even trying passive resistance. While she was putting her thread and needles together, Terne walked towards the terrible tavern-keeper. Night had fallen without being noticed by the lovers, and the robust figure of Master Blanche-Barbe stood out blackly against the bright light in the inn. "Aha! it is you, sir," said he, gloomily; "I thought so!"

"What do you mean by that, master?" demanded the chevalier, in an angry voice. "Do you find any fault with my conduct?"

Instead of answering this question the tavern-keeper began to exclaim: "Come home, Jeanneton! Come, you lazy creature! Your mother is waiting for you to serve the customers."

He seemed to have chosen his words especially to exasperate Terne, who was extremely angry at hearing him give a scullion's name to poor Violet, whom he had condemned to work at an ignoble calling. He had, at first, called her Jeannette, which was rustic, but Jeanneton was odious. The poor girl came forward with her eyes lowered, and her work in her hand, like a prisoner whom the jailer is about to send back to a dungeon. Blanche-Barbe stood aside to let her pass, and when she had entered the inn, he stood in the doorway, which his corpulent form filled up.

"Will you answer me?" said Terne, in a perfect fury.

"What can I say to you, sir?" said the tavern-keeper, without exciting himself. "Do you wish to compel me to tell you why I choose to call my daughter home? In that case you are losing your time, let me

inform you, for I am master of my own actions, and not accountable to any one."

"I wish to know why, just now, when you recognised me, you said, 'I thought so?'"

"Because I have very clearly seen, for some time past, that you are busying yourself much more about Jeanneton than I like."

"It is my turn to say to you, master, that I am free to do as I please."

"You are quite free, sir, but I must tell you that your approaches annoy me for two reasons: the first is that my daughter cannot marry you, and the second is that you are compromising Colonel La Jonquière and your humble servant, who also conspires against the Regent."

"What has the conspiracy to which I belong as well as yourself to do with your daughter?"

"I might remind you that plots at all times and seasons have failed through women, but I had rather tell you plainly that your behaviour the other day has set M. d'Argenson's spies after you."

"Ought I, then, so as to avoid the attention of the police, to have allowed Law's hirelings to take your daughter into his office?"

"If Jeanneton had been taken I should have known how to bring her back; and in the future she shall run no such risk. But I must tell you that the colonel who got you out of your scrape is very angry with you for your imprudence, and will tell you so to-night."

"It is not my fault if I have not seen him before, for I wish to talk with him."

"If you are so anxious to see him, why do you not come in here instead of making love and losing your time in nonsense?"

This reproach, so insolently worded, made the blood rush to the chevalier's brow, and he came nigh throwing himself upon the rude clown; however, he was master enough of himself to restrain his anger. He began to understand that the time and place were ill suited for quarrelling with a man who had the fate of Violet and of the conspiracy in his hands.

"Here?" demanded he. "Is the colonel here?"

"He is behind me, in the lower room, at the third table on the left, as you go in."

"Alone?"

"With Mille, his lieutenant."

"Are there any men drinking at the other tables?"

"Yes, of course."

"Well, as we are watched, it seems to me a mistake on the colonel's part to stay in a public room."

"You forget that La Jonquière knows how to disguise himself so as to defy all the spies of the police, and Mille is as good as he at that. You will scarcely be able to recognise them, and could not do so at all if I did not tell you where they are. As for you, I see that you have departed from your usual display of silk, gold-lace and Court-sword, and look like a counter-jumper. You can, therefore, come in without danger."

The chevalier could have dispensed with this compliment, disguised as admonition, and especially with the term applied to him; for however seriously a man may conspire, he does not like to be told that he looks ridiculous. He hid his annoyance, however, and without a word he signed to Blanche-Barbe to stand aside and let him go in. Then he entered the tavern, which looked that night of all others as though it was a meeting-place for stockholders. Numbers had hurried there after the market had

closed, some to conclude the operations of the day, others merely to appease the raging thirst created by the fever of gambling. The latter were grouped about the stables or in front of Dame Margot's counter. The former were passing, one by one, or two by two, through the crowd of drinkers, and slipping towards a spiral stairway, and ascending to the first storey, from which came the sound of clinking gold. Of the other staircase, that which led to the rooms where the band met in secret, and up which Count de Horn had gone on the night of the opera ball, not a trace was to be seen, for it was entirely hidden by a sliding panel, which was carefully closed when necessary. The day had been a busy one in the stock-market, talk was very brisk, and people were thirsty in proportion as they had been busy with speculation. A stout Dutchwoman, who was Dame Margot's only servant, had as much as she could do to supply all the beverage necessary to moisten the customers' parched lips, and it was easy to see why Blanche-Barbe had called in his daughter to help her mother. Poor Violet was already serving customers when Terne entered. She went sadly across the tavern floor with a pitcher in each hand, running here and there when the tapping of a knife upon the table summoned her to one or another of the rough speculators who demanded drink, and who made her hang her head with their rough jokes and rude compliments. No more flowers or sun for her, only the stifling atmosphere of the tavern, and servile toil! The chevalier did not think of comparing Violet with the daughters of Argos reduced to slavery, but his rage was the greater as he was obliged to restrain it. His eyes met hers, and it seemed to him that her rapid glance recommended prudence. So he made a violent effort over himself and went quietly towards the third table on the left. There were two seats free, for the table was only occupied by a lank, tall fellow, apparently a clerk, judging from his attire, and a tall, stout sub-farmer-general, who was red, pimply, and big in the belly, and had a full ruff and a number of warts upon his face. The two get-ups were so perfect that Terne hesitated for a moment before recognising Lorenzo de Mille and La Jonquière. An almost imperceptible grimace from the colonel was all that Terne got. He then came up to the table with an air of indifference, and civilly asked leave to seat himself at it, which was granted at once. To deceive the neighbours (who, however, were not looking at them), the financier and the clerk continued their conversation relative to a suit in the Cour des Aides. The chevalier ordered a bottle of Hermitage, and poured out a full goblet. "My friend," said the financier to his clerk, "I declare to you that this affair does not satisfy me as regards our friend M. Louis. Not at all! not at all!"

This opening made Terne, whose name was Louis, raise his head and listen.

"What has Louis done, sir?" asked Mille, the sham clerk, with an admirable assumption of simplicity.

"He has deceived me, or rather I was mistaken in him," said the financier, with a sigh. "When I took him with me—and he is to share the profits, mind—I thought that he was a serious man determined to devote all his time and ability to our success. But I find that he is full of foolish love-making, and is neglecting our matters to play the gallant, and, in fine, is capable of risking his fortune and mine to play the part of admirer to a frivolous woman."

"Pah!" said the clerk, "M. Louis is young yet, undoubtedly, and the young will be young, but my master, Griffard, often says that law must

come before love, and at the Palais we never allow ourselves to think of it till business is over."

Louis du Terne de Grandpré began to feel uncomfortable. He fully understood that all this was meant for himself, and was enraged at not being able to reply as he would have liked to do. There were ears to hear, to which he did not care to address his justification. On the other hand, he did not wish to submit to the lesson thus given him by the colonel, and he thought it best to address him in an indirect way.

"Sir," said he, politely raising his hand to his hat, "excuse me if I take part in a conversation which does not concern me, but I am myself employed in a salt store, and I am well acquainted with Louis, your head clerk, of whom you are complaining, and I should like to take his part."

"Do so," replied the tax-gatherer, with an ironical grimace.

"Well, then, since you will allow me, I would say that this morning Louis was talking to me and complaining of the delay in concluding a great operation in which you are both interested. He confessed that he was very much annoyed by the inaction in which you leave him, and he thought it harmless to employ this leisure as he pleased. He swore that his attachment for a worthy young girl could not do either his affairs or yours the slightest harm, and that he was still ready to go wherever you might wish to send him."

"I do not doubt the good intentions of my assistant," replied the financier, "but I think that he is strangely in fault in thinking that he can carry on a love affair and such a serious business as ours at the same time. Do you wish for a proof of what I say? No later than the day before yesterday he came near ruining all our hopes, and that only because his passion for the lady has made him crazy. Would you believe that he undertook to take her part in the very midst of the Rue Quincampoix by drawing his sword like a bully; he, a peaceful citizen, and he provoked such a quarrel that the rate of stock went down outrageously, to the great damage of everything. To put matters straight I had to make personal efforts. I succeeded by dint of strength and address in parrying the blow which threatened to fall upon us; but another time I might be less lucky, and I ask you to say to Louis, if you see him before I do, that I beg of him to be more prudent for the future."

"I shall do so, sir, and no doubt he will remember to do as you wish; but can I not tell him anything new about the important negotiation which you are sharing with him?"

The sham financier reflected for a moment, then glanced at the false clerk, and lowering his voice a little, he said: "I shall contrive to see M. Louis this evening, towards ten; but as everything must be foreseen, if, by any chance, I am prevented, oblige me by saying to him that, according to all appearances, we can conclude our bargain by the next new moon. He will know what that means. Let him hold himself in readiness to give me a lift at the beginning of March, and try to avoid any more foolish conduct."

"Very well, sir," said the chevalier, enchanted by the good news thus cunningly conveyed to him, "you may be sure that I shall tell M. Louis of your intentions, and let me tell you that he has the liveliest desire to speak freely with you, and will not fail to be at home to receive you."

The colonel—since the sham financier was he—gave a sign of approbation, but did not say a word. He imagined that the men at the other tables had grown less talkative, and that they took more interest than

was desirable in what he had been saying. These men, it is true, looked like worthy citizens who had accidentally come into the inn after speculating in stock in the neighbourhood, and it was difficult to imagine that any of them could be spies ; but La Jonquière, like a wise conspirator, was afraid of his very shadow, and, besides, he believed that in any case silence is golden, though speech may be silver. So he began slowly drinking his schiedam which his lieutenant, Mille, had poured out. Terne had now but one thought ; it was to have a free talk with the colonel, untrammelled by the presence of unknown hearers, and to get an explanation of how he meant to effect the Regent's abduction at the beginning of March. He felt a thrill of joy at the thought that but two weeks now remained to be passed in uncertainty. After that, glory, fortune, liberty, and the happiness of two beings would follow, for he had no more doubt of the success of the undertaking than he had of Violet's love. He was anxious, therefore, to know the exact plan of the last act of the conspiracy, and having nothing further to do just then at the Epée de Bois, he made ready to leave the place. All at once, however, a loud noise was heard at the lower part of the room. By the door which faced the Rue Quincampoix, a strange-looking man had come in, one whose appearance had caused all the tipplers to laugh. He was a hunchback, such as seldom exists, and more like a monstrous spider than a human being. His head, covered with red hair, was sunken between his angular shoulders, and his limbs were so strangely attached to his squat trunk that his arms, at a short distance, appeared to be blended with his legs, and both seemed to work like a scythe in a farmer-boy's hands. As for his characteristic deformity, the-hump, it differed from most humps. The category of humpbacks is divided, it is said, into those who are glaringly distorted and those who are scarcely deformed at all. This man belonged to the first set, for his hump was narrow and as pointed as that of Punchinello. He had a guitar slung across his breast, Spanish fashion, and his ragged clothes were pitiable to behold. He came forward, bowing in every direction, executed one or two leaps in a frog-like fashion, and then began to play upon his instrument, which he touched very lightly. His wish to divert the honourable company of carousers was obvious, and at the sight of his ridiculous-looking face every one of Blanche-Barbe's customers encouraged him to give a specimen of his talents. The chevalier alone did not appear to be interested in the abortion, and he called out to the servant, intending to pay for his bottle and go away, like a man who does not care for music. La Jonquière did not like it any better than Terne did, but he gave Terne a glance as if to induce him to remain. Then he muttered between his teeth La Fontaine's line—

“This block bedaubed with flour bodes nothing good, I trow.”

Terne thereupon remained. He understood that the colonel believed the hunchback to be a spy, and that in case of trouble he wished to keep his two lieutenants with him. “Gentlemen and ladies,” began the hunchback in a voice like a rattle, “if you will allow your very humble servant to try and amuse you, I will sing you an air which was very much admired at Court last year.”

“Yes, yes, let's have it !” exclaimed the carousers.

Then the misshapen *virtuoso*, assuming a languishing attitude, and rolling his eyes about with a love-sick expression, began to sing the following verses to the accompaniment of his guitar :

“ Tircis to me one eve did say,
 I ne'er had felt of love the sway,
 Had I not met—O Phyllis mine!—
 Thy lovely face, thy form divine!
 “ When minstrels sing in beauty's praise,
 To thee they dedicate their lays;
 For thou art beauty's self I swear,
 And with thee none did e'er compare! ”

Here the minstrel's voice, which was exactly like the mewing of a cat, was drowned by a burst of laughter. The uproar was so great that the chevalier, whose voice was covered by it, had a chance to whisper to La Jonquière : “ It would be better for me to slip off and wait for you at my house. This fellow is not worth minding.”

“ That may be,” said the colonel, “ but we shall soon know, for I'm going to put him to proof.” And striking with his fist upon the table to command silence, the financier with the pimply nose called out in a deep bass voice : “ Hallo ! you fellow with the hump, do you take us for lovesick boobies to sing your shepherd's airs to us ? ”

“ And to a tune that would do for the devil's funeral ? ” added the clerk.

“ Yes, yes, that is too pastoral,” said all the carousers together.

“ Not lively enough,” added a big lackey, whom his speculations that day had put in a good humour.

Meantime, the hunchback musician was bowing in every direction with a look like a frightened cur. “ My good sir,” said the poor devil, “ I very humbly beg your pardon. The words of this air were composed by the Regent himself, and I thought—”

“ They're very fine, to be sure ! Phyllis ! Tircis ! that is very nice for countryfolk, that kind of mythology,” interrupted the sham financier. “ Come ! give us something else.”

“ I will sing as much as you like, my good sirs. Will you have a drinking song ? ”

“ I should like that better. But have you not got some good verses in your collection of a—you know what I mean.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ Sarcastic, you know ! Christmas carols or popular songs, but spicy, and written to ridicule the Court.” While he spoke, La Jonquière glanced at Terne as if to say : “ Attention, this is the proof.”

If it was a trap the ambulating singer fell into it. Walking sideways like a crab, he came forward towards the financier, who so frankly expressed his liking for forbidden verse, and said with a frightful grimace : “ The kind of thing you ask for, sir, is what I sing the best. I know by heart all the verses that have been composed about the Regent, Dubois, Law, and Argenson, and I can sing them.”

The colonel winked at the chevalier, who understood him. This glance meant : “ Now I know what I wanted to know ; the man is a spy.”

And, indeed, it was clear that a mere street-singer would not dare to sing seditious songs in a public place and before an unknown audience. With the police then about, it would have been risking imprisonment in the Bastille. A man who was paid and protected by the authorities of the kingdom alone could dare to allow himself such license. Terne, struck by this reasoning, which was so just, began to examine the hunchback more attentively, but in vain did he scrutinise every feature of the fellow's queer face ; he detected nothing that reminded him of any one else, and there

seemed nothing suspicious about the singer. He looked like a genuine poor deformed creature, and had that air of suffering customary to a man who is often hungry, the sickly look of one whom nature has dealt with harshly, and who, from childhood up, has been used to being mocked and sneered at by everybody. His distorted features bore no trace of any feeling except that of humility; not even did his eyes beam with that light of intelligence which even those most skilful in the art of creating a borrowed personality cannot wholly dismiss from their faces. Encouraged by this rapid observation, the chevalier shrugged his shoulders, and resigned himself to losing his time by not contradicting the colonel, who evidently persisted in not trusting the man with the guitar, for he cried out: "What! you know the songs against Phillip and all his gang, and you sing us your shepherd's airs instead? Make up for your folly at once by singing us the best of the lot."

"Oh, with pleasure, my good sir," said the hunchback; "and to begin, just listen to this about the Secretary of State whom the Regent is so fond of:

" Dubois is my name,
Dubois is my name,
The wood that clowns are made of is the very same—
Indeed, I was a clown in other days, 'tis said—
And any one can see that I've got a wooden head.
Yes, Dubois, I am he,
With the wooden head, d'you see?"

"That is very pretty," gravely said the colonel—or rather the sham financier; "but it is too well known."

"Do you prefer the song that has the refrain:

" As he is wood, why, let him burn?"

"No, no, I heard that three years ago. Let the servant alone and sing about the master."

"Here is one quite new, and it goes to the air of 'Le Branle de Metz,'" said the distorted *virtuoso*, boldly:

" Twould be a great, a priceless boon,
If through Provence the plague did rage;
Twould be a great, a priceless boon,
If bloody war did only wage.
For then the Regent would turn devout,
And kick his witches and wizards out;
His daughters, too, he'd rate and clout;
And just like me, he'd feel very ill,
For I guess there'd be no wine to swill."

"That is better," said the spurious financier; "it is quite smart."

"I am afraid that it is too smart," said Terne, in a low tone. "It has already put Blanche-Barbe's customers to flight."

And, in point of fact, some timid fellows among the throng at the tavern had gone away, without doubt, in order to avoid associating, even involuntarily, with the bold demonstrations of which this song was a specimen.

"Let the cowards go, and stay with us, my friend," said the colonel to the hunchback; "you shall sing for us, if the others are too afraid of being compromised, and you won't lose anything by it, for I will treat you as surely as I made sixty thousand livres yesterday when stock fell. That reminds me that you have not yet sung us a song about the 'Ace of Hearts' and his 'system.'"

"Never mind, sir, I will sing you a good one:

“ Since a Jew from Scotland’s come
Upon our gold to thrive,
All the rogues have rich become,
And in their coaches drive.”

‘ And listen to this :

“ On Monday, lots of stock I buy,
On Tuesday, I make millions ;
On Wednesday, a new coach I try,
On Thursday, dance cotillions.
On Friday, I am at the ball ;
On Saturday, behold my fall,
For out in the street I starve and die,
Ah ! what a fool am I ! ”

This time the carousers burst into a general laugh. Nevertheless, they were all in the habit of frequenting the Rue Quincampoix, and were fishing for fortunes in muddy waters ; but when popular songs are written in France, those who are most laughed at laugh the loudest at the songs against themselves. Encouraged by his success, the hunchback resumed —to an air which is still sung nowadays, and which will go down to posterity :

“ Law, the eldest son of Satan,
Fleeces every one,
All our money he has taken,
And he parts with none.
To the Regent we’ll complain,
La Faridondaine ! La Faridondaine !
Ay, he’ll return it all again,
Just as they do in Barbary—
Don’t you see ? ”

“ Do you know,” exclaimed La Jonquière, “ that you are a very bold sort of chap ? You have attacked everybody except the head of the police.”

“ I am coming to him, good sir, I am coming to him,” said the hunchback, strumming his guitar, and he sung :

“ Argenson, who’s very cunning,
As this my song reveals,
Thought it would be very stunning
If he could get the Seals.
Don’t he wish that he may get ‘em,
Get ‘em, get the Seals ! ”

The colonel checked the sarcastic lay by exclaiming : “ By my faith, I have a great mind to kiss you ! You are very ugly, but no matter, I must clasp you to my heart.”

“ Oh, sir,” stammered the fellow, retreating as far as he could from the formidable grasp of the Goliath disguised as a tax-gatherer, “ don’t think of such a thing. It would be doing me too much honour.”

“ True ! I might crush you in my embrace without intending to hurt you ; but you must drink a glass of schiedam with me, deuce take it ! ”

“ I will, my lord, I will,” replied the hunchback, trembling.

“ Come, sit down,” called out La Jonquière, pushing a stool which was unoccupied towards him, and beckoning to him to come to the table where he sat with his two lieutenants.

The singer sat down without much ado, and held out his glass, which he drained at one gulp. Then he began to rub his stomach and cast up his eyes, a pantomime which in all countries is supposed to indicate a blissful condition of stomach. Terne had stealthily kept his eye upon him all the

time, and was inclined to believe that the colonel's suspicions were unfounded. This last act made him conclude that the hunchback was innocent. The face which a few drops of liquor could thus transform could not be that of a designing man. The colonel and Mille, however, seemed to continue in their original belief, for they had managed to place the hunchback between them and were close to him. The chevalier thought their precautions were idle, and that they did not need him. So he rose quietly and went to Dame Margot's counter to pay for his bottle of Hermitage. Violet was hurrying about waiting upon the customers, and had a chance to say to him in a low tone : "Don't trust the hunchback, and don't go out till I can speak to you."

This advice might be good, but the chevalier had not expected it from the person who gave it. Violet had not for a single instant ceased to wait upon her father's customers, and had not appeared to notice either the singer or his songs. How was it that her suspicions as well as the colonel's had been aroused ? How had she guessed that he was a spy, or at all events an enemy ? Terne marvelled at it greatly, and could not guess what it all meant ; still whatever he might think of the warning it would be madness to disregard it. So he resolved to keep clear of the guitar-player, and instead of returning to the table where the fellow had seated himself between the pair who were watching him, he talked with Dame Margot while watching for a chance to ask an explanation of Violet. Master Blanche-Barbe was still smoking his pipe near the door which opened on to the Allée de Venise, and which he kept open without disturbing himself to find out whether the air of the foggy February night suited his customers or not. Nothing was visible but his broad back and his cap, around which the smoke circled. The chance was a good one for speaking seriously with the landlady of the Epée de Bois, and this the chevalier had long desired to do. Dame Margot did not dislike him as her husband did, and had never been harsh to her daughter. He was sure of being listened to if he spoke to her of Violet, and this he desired to do. The counter was so placed as to be near the table which he had just left, so that he could follow what the hunchback was saying without appearing to listen, and at the same time chat with his hostess. This was all the more easy as the song against the dreaded Argenson had put a number of the revellers to flight, and there was silence in the inn, and many an empty seat. Terne found Dame Margot occupied in making out the account of two Jew brokers who had come down from the upper floor, and while she was doing this he turned towards the table where his friends were seated. Just then his eyes met those of the hunchback, who was looking about him with apparent content, and he thought that he detected a strange expression on the fellow's face such as he could not help thinking was unsuited to a beggar. "Well, my friend," shouted the colonel, giving the poor devil a hearty slap on the shoulder, "do you feel better, now that your throat is not so dry?"

"Oh, yes, sir," sighed the guitar-player ; "I have not had such luck for a long time ; I make so little at my poor work that I do not often have a chance to drink with gay fellows. When I came in I felt as though all the fog on the Seine had got into my throat ; but now that I am warm, I could sing till to-morrow morning, if you wished."

"No, no ; that's enough for the present," said La Jonquière. "Your songs are amusing, but they frighten fools away, and we must not injure Master Blanche-Barbe's business. Tell me all about yourself instead."

"Ah! my good gentlemen, my history would not amuse either of you. I came into the world deformed as you see, and I was found in the street. And if I had not met with charitable people who fed me I could not——"

"Who taught you to play the guitar?" interrupted the colonel. He wished to watch the effect of this sudden question.

"I was taught by a Spaniard who came to Paris to sell chocolate, and who took me to wait in his shop, or rather as a kind of sign to draw custom. It is true that I do not play as well as I might."

"What makes you look over there all the time?" again interrupted La Jonquière.

This time the hunchback, who had glanced stealthily at Terne, who was leaning over the counter, was somewhat disconcerted. "Excuse me, gentlemen," stammered he, writhing about on his stool, "I thought that—that—I recognised the gentleman who was sitting here just now."

"That was not a gentleman," said the colonel, with a loud laugh. "I don't know him, but I bet ten certificates against a hundred louis that he is some draper's clerk or salt-dealer's assistant."

"Excuse me, gentlemen, do! I'm not used to being with noblemen, and I do not know them from mere citizens."

"That is easy to see. But tell me, where did you ever see that fellow before?"

"I don't know, indeed; I must have been mistaken. But I think it was at a roaster's in the Rue aux Ours, who sometimes lets me eat the leavings."

The hunchback gave this explanation with such a simple air, that Terne, who had heard all that had been said, reverted to his first idea of him. "He is a poor beggar, and nothing more," thought he. And placing himself in front of Dame Margot, who had got rid of her customers, he said in a low tone, so that no one could hear but herself: "Master Pierre is in a very sulky mood to-night."

"Heaven knows he is, chevalier!" sighed the woman. "Was he rude to you? I cannot bear to think how he behaved to the young nobleman whom the colonel took up stairs with him, and who certainly must belong to the house of Horn, for he is the image of the old prince. I am always afraid that Pierre will give way to some new whim and be rude again."

"If his rudeness only affected me, Dame Margot, I should not care, but he attacks a person whom I cannot bear to see ill-treated. I mean your daughter."

"Violet? Alas! I know that very well; and if he heard me call her Violet instead of Jeanneton—the frightful name which he has given her—he would begin his scolding again."

"Well, Dame Margot, the time and place are ill chosen for asking an explanation; but I have so seldom a chance of speaking to you alone that I beg of you to answer me. How is it that Master Pierre can so ill-treat his own child? If she had a sister, or a brother, I might think that he felt some unjust preference, but she is his only child. So much harshness cannot be explained away by the fact that he is naturally rude and rough. He may have lived with wild boars in the forests, but even those animals have some feeling for their own offspring."

The chevalier was about to add more, but happening to look up he saw that the expression of Dame Margot's face was undergoing a most remarkable change. She who seemed never to feel emotion, any more than poetic

sentiment, was now turning red and white, and trembling so that her glasses on the counter actually stirred with the tremor that shook her frame. This agitation seemed a flash of revelation to Terne. He realised that he was on delicate ground, and that it would be cruel to say more. However, the worthy woman spoke so as to remove any doubt of his that might remain. "Ah, chevalier," said she, with a deep sigh, "If you only knew all that Pierre has made me suffer on account of that child. He has always suspected that she was not his own daughter. He has made us both bear the penalty of his unjust doubts. I swear to you that I do not deserve this. He has crushed me with his cruelty and contempt for sixteen years and more."

While the chevalier was listening to this simple avowal, he tried to think of something to say to show the hostess how much he felt for her, and to induce her to tell him more, but the colonel's deep bass voice fell upon his ear. "Let that young fellow alone," said the sham financier. "Do you hear me, hunchback?"

This remark, which reminded the chevalier that the deformed singer had given him a strange look, made him turn his attention to the table again. "You never saw him before, I'll venture to say," continued La Jonquière, "and you must be very near-sighted to mistake him for one of your roaster's customers."

"I may be mistaken," said the hunchback, in an humble tone.

"Well, don't bother your head about him, but help me to drink up this gin."

"With pleasure, good sir."

"Come now, I like you, and want to give you a helping hand."

"What the devil can he do with that fellow, who would be a failure, even as a monkey?" thought the chevalier. "He is losing precious time, the colonel is, and I am going—"

"Do not stir," said Violet, in his ear as she came up to take a pitcher of beer from the counter. "I am sure, now, that that hunchback is the man who tried to carry me off on the day before yesterday." Then she hastily ran away.

She had spoken so quickly and had gone away so lightly, that no one, not even Dame Margot, had observed her. As for Terne, her curt warning seemed to him strange, not to say foolish. He, too, had been close to the individual in the grey coat in the Rue Quincampoix, and did not see the slightest resemblance between the hireling of the "Ace of Hearts" and the frightful gnome who had come to the tavern to strum upon the guitar. "Fear has upset the poor child," he thought to himself, sadly.

At all hazards, however, he kept on his guard and listened more attentively to the conversation between the colonel and the dwarf. He was longing for the talk to come to an end, for he did not wish to indefinitely prolong his stay in front of the counter. Master Blanche-Barbe, no doubt, would soon return, and his presence indoors would annoy the lovers by frightening Violet and forcing Terne to leave Dame Margot. Besides, La Jonquière was managing matters in a summary way with his foe, and asking searching questions about his pursuits. "I tell you, comrade, that I mean to help you, and I'm in earnest," he persisted, when he had drained his glass.

"Help me, good sir!" exclaimed the hunchback. "Alas! I am not good for much."

" You are merry enough to drive away any one's low spirits, and that is all I want. I, as you see, am a farmer of the revenues, and a great friend of M. Pâris du Vernet, a farmer general, who has confided some of his work to me, and I am rich and able to do as I please. If you see me in this old tavern it is because I've been settling some affairs with a broker; that is why I brought my lawyer's clerk here," added he, pointing to Lorenzo de Mille, who sat up as straight as a bean-pole and continued drinking in a composed manner. The hunchback bowed till his chin touched the table. He undoubtedly wished to express how much he felt the kindness of M. Pâris du Vernet's friend ; but as he bowed he contrived to glance over at Terne. " Now, I should like," resumed the colonel, " to have a comic singer in my house. I like political songs and gay refrains. You could sing me as many as I should care to hear, and all you would have to do would be to sing. I would lodge you, and clothe you, and feed you. You could be with my servants, and I would give you ten crowns a month. Would that suit you ? "

" Suit me ? Why, that would be Paradise !" exclaimed the guitar-player, delightedly.

" Well, then, you shall be my buffoon just as Langély was King Louis XIII.'s."

" Oh, my lord ! how kind you are ! "

La Jonquière looked keenly at the hunchback, and while the latter was bowing and scraping, added : " You can come with me now. I am going back to my lodgings, and I will take you with me."

At this proposition, which was evidently made by the colonel to see what effect it would produce, the hunchback not only did not flinch, but began to clap his hands with delight, and exclaimed : " I am ready to go with you, my lord. What luck ! I thought that I should have to sleep out of doors to-night. You cannot think how hard it is, my lord, to sleep in the street."

Whilst the musician was expressing his joy in these simple terms, his benefactor was shaking his head and pursing up his mouth. All at once he began to whistle an air from the " Dragons de Malplaquet," and, turning his face towards the counter, he looked askance at Terne. The chevalier detected in the eyes of the leader of the conspiracy an expression which signified : " I was mistaken. The man is not a spy, and we need not trouble ourselves about him." And, in fact, the proof seemed decisive. A spy would have become confused, and would not have consented to repair to the abode of a man upon whom he had come to spy. Terne, however, looked round to consult Violet. He did not perceive her in the room. At this moment Dame Margot, who had seemed lost in sad thoughts, said, in a low tone : " Ah ! chevalier, Violet is very imprudent. She has ventured out again. What can she be about, in the name of Heaven ? I hope that Pierre will not come in. If he finds that she has gone out in spite of him and neglected the customers——"

" Here she is, Dame Margot," whispered Terne.

Just then, indeed, the young girl slipped into the hall, through the doorway facing the Rue Quincampoix. She pushed it to carefully, crossed the tavern on tiptoe, and came close to the chevalier. " The others are there," she muttered, " the agents of the detective force : they are watching both ends of the street, and the entrance of the alley."

She then ran off to wait upon an impatient customer at the end of the room,

Terne could not help starting. The warning this time was so clear, and the fresh information was so consistent with the presence of a disguised police agent in the person of the hunchback, that the chevalier began to reflect as to the best way to get out of the difficulty. He did not know what to think. How could he warn the colonel? How could he slip away himself? The untiring Violet again came to his aid. She ran up with a pitchcr in one hand and some money in the other, and placing both on the counter, said : "Go out by the alley as soon as my father comes in. When once you are outside keep close to the wall on the left, push the secret door in the wall open, and hide in the garden."

This was good advice, and Terne was of that opinion, but he took advantage of the time that Dame Margot required to fill the pint measure and give change, to say : "The colonel is not aware of this danger."

"No matter. They have not come for him. The spy doesn't know him, and hasn't recognised him. He is only watching you."

"What makes you think so? How do you know that this man——"

"Is not a hunchback? You shall see," said Violet, taking a long black pin from her hair. The pint measure was now full, and the change ready. "See what I am going to do," resumed the young girl in a low tone, "and when you are certain that the guitar-player is not what he seems, promise me to do as I tell you, without troubling yourself about anything else."

She was already far off when Terne responded "I promise."

"Come, hunchback," exclaimed La Jonquière, "I will pay for the drinks and we'll be off."

"I am at your orders, my lord," said the deformed musician, with a whine.

"Ah! now I think of it," suddenly exclaimed the colonel, smiting his forehead, "there's Father Abraham's receipt which you forgot to ask for. I cannot go home without it."

This remark was addressed to the lawyer's clerk, represented by Mille, who immediately fell in with his leader's idea, and said in a simple way : "Why did you not remind me before, sir? Abraham has gone, but I know where we can find him."

"Then we must go at once, for I do not want to go to bed without having my broker's receipt. Hunchback, my friend, I cannot take you with me now, for I am not going straight home; but if you will come in two hours' time to M. Pâris du Vernct's house, and wait outside, I will take you with me as I come out."

"As you please, my lord," said the singer, with a sigh. And his face expressed the resignation as well as disappointment of a man who, after counting upon a stroke of good luck, sees it escape him.

Terne listened intently, and perfectly well understood that La Jonquière, at ease with regard to the hunchback, was now making an excuse to get rid of keeping his promise of hospitality. It remained to be seen how the guitar-player would act. "Come here, my girl," called out the colonel, tapping on his table with a double pistole; "come, let me pay you for the bottle we have drunk."

Violet was busy at the other end of the room, still she heard and came quickly enough. In passing by the chevalier, she nudged his elbow, and said : "Look at what I am going to do," and quickly went up to the colonel's table. The deformed musician was still seated between Mille and La Jonquière. In order to take the money, Violet was obliged to pass behind him. The colonel looked up at the ceiling, and pretended to be

lost in thought ; but Terne, who did not take his eyes off Violet, distinctly saw her drive her long pin into the enormous hump between the singer's shoulders. It disappeared up to the head in the supposed lump of flesh, but the hunchback did not flinch. This was conclusive. A hunchback with a false hump could be nothing but a spy. Thanks to this ingenious stratagem of Violet's invention, the chevalier now had not a shadow of doubt. This was the moment, or never, to keep his promise to his liberator, and to slip out through the Allée de Venise. Terne did so. While Master Blanche-Barbe, having finished his pipe, left the doorway and made his entrance into the tavern with the majestic air of some nobleman surveying his domains, Violet's lover slipped noiselessly between the tables, ran into the little street, and disappeared amid the darkness outside. As may be supposed, the hunchback had not lost sight of him for a single instant ; for, scarcely had he missed him than he rose with many twistings and writhings, and said, with an humble look : "Excuse me, my good sir, if I retire. I cannot walk very fast, and M. Pâris du Vernet's house is a long way off. Besides, it is late, and the watch does not care to have people like me prowling about town. If they should meet me I might have to go to the jail at the Petit-Châtelet for the night. That is why, if you will allow me, I——"

"Go, my son," said the colonel, in a compassionate tone, "go, and think over your best songs on the way, so that, if M. Pâris wishes to hear you sing, I can give him a specimen of your talents. Go as quickly as you can to his door, and don't spare your crooked legs. I will find you there if you keep about the door. Don't stir till you hear me call to you or see me come out."

"I shall be there, my lord, and I will wait for you till to morrow morning, if need be," said the hunchback, bowing to the very ground, and he went towards the door which opened upon the alley. But he found Master Blanche-Barbe in his way, and the tavern-keeper said to him in a voice like thunder : "Not that way, hunchback ! You can only go out by the Rue Quincampoix at this time of night."

The poor hunchback drew back in terror, turned on his heel, and limped in the direction pointed out by the terrible tavern-keeper. The doorway was half open, he slipped through and fled, taking with him the pin which, quite without his knowledge, was still sticking in his hump. "Let him go," said the colonel, in a low tone, to his acolyte. "In five minutes' time we can leave, and you can come with me to Terne's lodgings. I must speak with him to night, and I am sure that he has gone straight home. But I am vexed at having lost my time in treating that ugly hunchback. He did not deserve the slightest attention, and is not worth the gin which I gave him to drink. I don't know why I thought he was one of Argenson's spies."

"Those fellows are very cunning," said Mille.

"You are a fool. If that dirty toad had been with the lieutenant of the watch he would have hesitated when I proposed to take him home with me. No ! no ! he is only a poor devil of a mountebank, and nothing more. I'll venture to say that Blanche-Barbe knows him. Holloa, master !" added the colonel, calling out to the innkeeper, "does that fellow come here often to sing ?"

"Who ? That four-footed beggar ? Never, thank Heaven !" growled the innkeeper. "And if he shows his ugly phiz here again, I'll shake him so that he won't be in any hurry to come here again. It is a good thing

for him that I had my pipe to finish, and that the wind outside prevented me from hearing his caterwaulings."

La Jonquière said no more, but his face grew dark. "Humph! my suspicions prove to be well founded," muttered he. "I have a great mind to go to Pâris du Vernet's house to see if the hunchback has gone there. By Heaveu! if he has been making game of me, I——"

At this moment Violet came up with the change of the double pistole, and she, better than any one else, was able to clear up the colonel's doubts. Why did she say nothing of her discovery? Probably because she was interested in the chevalier alone. She certainly said nothing, and the colonel was greatly perplexed and even somewhat anxious. While he was deliberating as to whether he had better set out in pursuit of the suspicious singer or go to Terne's lodgings, the hunchback, who was causing him so much perplexity, was going up the Rue Quincampoix more lightly than his shape would have argued as possible. After passing the threshold of the inn, he at first dragged himself along like a cripple, but scarcely had he passed the Allée de Venise than he began to hasten his steps. Strange to say, his twisted figure straightened as he went, his crooked legs became like those of other men, his head, which had been lowered near his hump, rose up. There was a sudden and complete metamorphosis, such as was seen in the Middle Ages in the Cour des Miracles. There remained the hump, but he carried this so lightly that it scarcely appeared to belong to him. At thirty paces from the tavern the strange man stopped in the middle of the street, straight as a poplar and firm as a rock.

The Paris authorities did not pride themselves in 1720 upon lighting the city very well; and that night, on pretence that the moon was not yet in her last phase, they had neglected to ignite the lanterns invented in former days by M. de la Reynie, so that there was not much more light than in an oven. However, the hunchback began to whistle, and at this signal five or six human forms emerged from the shadows of surrounding houses, and came noiselessly forward.

"Has any one passed by?" he demanded, in a low tone.

"No one, during the last twenty minutes," replied the men of the watch, who had gathered round him.

"Nor at the other end of the street?"

"No. The squad on that side would have called out to us."

"Good! then he is still in the alley. All is well! I was afraid I was too late."

"You found some one, then, at the tavern, eh, M. Larfaille?" asked one of the guard.

"Yes, my lad; it was the man who defended the flower-girl the other day. He is disguised as a cit., but I recognised him at once."

"Oho! the rascal shall pay us for the trick he played us."

"I hope so, but we must be prudent. I should like to have him captured without giving him a chance to cry out, for there are still several people inside the Epée de Bois, and I do not wish to be interfered with."

"Be easy, M. Larfaille; everything is ready; the gag, the handcuffs, and all."

"Very well. Let two men remain here on guard, take the others and come with me to the alley. You must work quickly. The men who are drinking inside may come out at any moment."

"If they pass while we are down there, shall our sentinels stop them?"

"That would be useless. Our man is in the Allée de Venise. He cannot get out, for you would have seen him, nor can he have gone back into the tavern, for Blanche-Barbe has closed the door inside. Come; and when we find him don't give him time to suspect what is going on."

The manœuvre ordered by the detective was effected at once. The band divided into two groups, one of which remained in the Rue Quincampoix, while the other followed Larfaille. The side street without an outlet, into which Terne had passed on leaving the tavern, was not long or difficult to examine, for it was not more than forty feet in length, and five in width. The detective and his men entered it. Those who had the gag and the hand-cords went ahead, with their eyes and ears on the alert, and walking very stealthily, like cats. The chevalier could not escape them, if he were still in the alley, unless he had wings to fly into the air, and Larfaille, who did not doubt his being there, was overjoyed. His disappointment may be imagined when, after five minutes' silent walking, he found himself at the wall which closed the alley. He could scarcely restrain a cry of rage. "You have deceived me, or you are but a fool," said he, in a low tone, to his assistant. "The man must have gone out of the alley and reached the Rue Quincampoix. He must have passed right under your very nose."

"I swear that he did not, sir, and my men will tell you the same."

The detective reflected for a moment, then said: "There must be some doors here, then?"

"None but that of the tavern, and if it had been re-opened we should have heard the noise of the bolt, as we did when it closed."

"No windows, either?"

"None. Nothing but walls."

"Walls?" repeated Larfaille. "Then he must have climbed over them."

"Oh, no! they are twenty feet high, at least."

"No matter! We must examine them closely, and I shall return here by daylight."

"Meantime, the scamp has escaped us. Ah! I am infuriated," said the guard.

"Not more infuriated than I am," replied the detective, between his teeth. "An affair that was so well conducted, and with all the chances in our favour! I thought I had the fellow, and that, through him, I should get at La Jonquière, and yet now he is off and away! He must have been told the Rue Quincampoix was watched; he took his precautions, and did not leave the alley. But how could he get away without passing you all? How can he have escaped? Who could have warned him?"

"Ah! it may have been one of the servant-girls at the Epée de Bois. One came out about ten minutes before you did, and looked up and down the street, and then returned into the inn. She must have seen some one of my men who did not keep out of sight carefully enough."

"Ah! I understand it all! It was she!"

"She? Who?"

"I understand it!" repeated the detective, who had quite recovered his self-possession. "It would be idle, even dangerous, to remain here any longer. Go to your comrades. I know now what I have to do."

"But, M. Larfaille, there are a number of us. There are twelve, at least, within call and as many in the rear-guard. If we rush into the tavern and search it, wouldn't that do? I believe that the scamp who is mocking us is not far off, and by rapid action he might be captured within."

The detective pondered for a moment. He was evidently tempted to use violent measures, for the miraculous disappearance of the man whom he had thought himself so sure of, had thrown him into a state of violent irritation. However, his final decision was in favour of prudence. "No," muttered he, "it would be running the risk of losing all on a single throw, whereas, by returning to my first idea, I am sure of winning eventually. All is over for the night. Let us go."

The assistant police-agent did not reply, but made his men turn back. When they emerged from the alley the sentinels were met. They had not stirred. "Has any one passed?" demanded Larfaille.

"Yes," replied the two men, "the customers are beginning to go out. We just saw two go up the street, one tall, stout fellow, the other tall and thin."

"The farmer of the revenues and the clerk," thought the detective to himself, and he added aloud: "You may go off, now, my lads; I am going home. To-morrow I will tell you what to do."

Larfaille was very popular, and exercised undisputed authority over the lower ranks of the police. He was always obeyed in ordinary cases, and the better now, of course, as it was known that Lieutenant-General d'Argenson had given him full powers. This is why no one objected. The squad went away, a few at a time; the spies at the end of the street were told that they need not remain; everybody, in a word, went off quietly, ready to meet again around the Epée de Bois, or to forget the way to it, as might be. Larfaille remained alone with his false hump, and it need scarcely be said that instead of repairing to the house of M. Paris du Vernet, he went back to his own home in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux. He longed to get away from the tavern, where, as he was obliged to admit, he had failed.

He knew nothing more than on his arrival there, and worse still, he had perhaps dangerously compromised himself, for if the man whom he sought had been able to escape it was because he had been warned by some one. This some one must be Violet. Larfaille felt sure of it, and this confirmed him in the belief that it would be possible to reach La Jonquière through the flower-girl whom one of the colonel's lieutenants loved. The detective did not doubt but that he had recognised the cavalier, who, a day or two before, had taken the young girl's part in the Rue Quincampoix.

From this persistent protection on the part of a young nobleman, and his watchfulness over a flower-girl who had become a mere servant at a tavern, he concluded, after a course of close logical reasoning, that the nobleman was conspiring, and that the nest of the conspiracy was in Master Blanche-Barbe's house. It was necessary to subject the tavern and the nobleman to incessant observation, and Larfaille could not watch over the man and house himself. In reflecting as to this new state of things, he reverted to his original idea, and the project approved of by Dubois, which was to carry off Violet without any further delay. He even decided in his own mind to do this as soon as possible, if only to get rid of an inconvenient obstacle—a woman who had seen through his clever plot, and had skilfully given the alarm to her suspicious friend. At the same time Larfaille revolved in his own mind all the incidents of the evening, and his thoughts dwelt upon the financier and the lawyer's clerk, who had welcomed him so warmly when he had sung seditious songs. For the first time it now occurred to him that these men had been singularly polite and kind to a poor devil of a hunchback, the financier

especially, who had so abruptly proffered hospitality and had withdrawn the offer as suddenly. The conduct of these two men began to appear strange to Larfaillé, who wondered why their behaviour had not struck him as singular before. "That is the consequence of having but one idea," thought he; "I had eyes for the young girl's lover only, and I thus neglected examining the men who offered me refreshment. The lover was seated at their table in the first place, although he pretended not to be acquainted with them. It may be that all these rogues were leagued together. I am no better than a fool! I ought to have told my men to keep an eye on them and follow them when they passed by. It is too late now; the fellows are far off by this time."

They were, indeed, as La Jonquière and Mille had been striding along towards the house of Pâris du Vernet, whither they were bound on account of the suspicions they entertained as to the hunchback, and fate willed it that at the very hour when the detective was beginning to speculate as to their behaviour, the colonel was returning to his original suspicions as regarded the hunchback. This mutual distrust, which had so suddenly arisen, would certainly have brought about a bad result as regarded the detective had the parties met, but the tragedy enacted by these equally able actors was not destined to end that night, for each was walking away from the other. La Jonquière and his lieutenant were going towards the Place Vendôme, while Larfaillé was hurrying on towards the Marais. He entered his own lodgings undisturbed, and found Gudule at the door awaiting him. In spite of his urgent entreaties and even repeated orders, he had never been able to induce her to retire till she had kissed him and bade him good night. His duties often detained him till a very late hour; he sometimes did not return till dawn; but this made no difference, and Gudule, at the risk of injuring her health by long vigils, always remained up till she had seen her adopted father, embraced him, and, perhaps, mildly scolded him. She heard him when he was yet far off, recognising his step in the street, and as soon as he came up stairs she would open the door of her room and sit upon the last step on the stairs ready to fling her arms about his neck. Larfaillé remonstrated, reproached her, declared that he would not allow her to act in such an insane way, that it could not go on, and so forth, and invariably ended by giving way, thanking and caressing her.

The various disguises which he wore did not prevent this touching scene from being repeated every night, for Gudule was used to disguises and recognised him, no matter how he was transformed. Besides, she was never surprised, nor ever asked why he thus unceasingly masqueraded in so many various garbs. Larfaillé, on his part, was careful not to give any explanations which the dear child never demanded; and so they led as uniform and quiet a life as that of any petty shopkeeper in the city, who, after shutting up, might go home to the humble lodging where his daughter awaited him. On the night in question, when Larfaillé appeared with his hump, things went on as usual, and there was no difference in Gudule's display of affection. She seemed even more affectionate and joyous than ever at seeing him. Still the police agent fancied he detected a sad look in her sweet face, and remarked that her eyes were red. He wondered whether she had been weeping, and why she had wept. So far he had never known her to have a sorrow, and he could not guess how any grief had reached her. Finally he dismissed the idea and gave himself up to the delight of being at home, far from conspiracies, enemies, and

even his comrades, detectives like himself. He lounged to be rid of his disguise, which brought back terrible remembrances of the silent, bitter and implacable war into which his resolution to avenge Desgrais had led him. So he began by taking off his odd wig, and plunging his head into a basin of water which Gudule had in readiness for him. As he washed his face, his natural looks returned. He was taking off his false hump when a cry of surprise, almost of fear, made him turn to look at Gudule. "What ails you, my child?" asked Larfaille, anxiously.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Gudule, "look here!" And thereupon she drew a long pin—that which Violet had worn in her hair—from the artificial protuberance.

As Larfaille looked at the pin his astonishment was great indeed, and it soon turned to anger, for he saw that it was such a pin as women wear in their hair. The wasp that had stung him, so to speak, was one which had long been buzzing about him. He realised that Master Blanche-Barbe's daughter had been at work. His men had seen her looking out at them in the Rue Quincampoix. This the cunning flower-girl had undoubtedly done in order to ascertain whether the road was free for her lover. She had then returned to warn him that there were spies about, and that he must fly by the Allée de Venise. Finally, in order to show him the danger that existed, she had thought of using the pin, and so proving the presence of a spy. This was all clear to Larfaille now. It seemed to him a skilful trick. Violet was decidedly an adversary worthy of him. Then, as in his brain—so used to detective work—the practical conclusion always followed close upon material proof and the consequent reasoning, he decided that the tavern was the usual meeting-place of the plotters. He realised that the rooms there were full of hiding-places, and that it was not easy to catch the conspirators at their work. Then, also, it became evident that the former flower-girl, who was a servant by night and a seamstress by day, was the most devoted auxiliary imaginable, and being skilful, the most dangerous friend of the Regent's invisible enemies.

The detective resolved to rid himself of this foe in female garb. It could not be difficult, for he had the prime minister's warrant in blank in his pocket. An abduction was the simplest thing in the world for a man in his business to effect. The kidnapping of Violet was irrevocably determined upon that night. The colonel's underhand way of acting left the detective but few advantages. As long as Blanche-Barbe's daughter waited upon the customers at the tavern, Larfaille could not think of going there again, even under the best of disguises. The eyes that had found him out in spite of his bushy wig and false hump might see through any trick. It was absolutely necessary to act beyond their range of vision; it would therefore be necessary to seize upon the young girl and carry her off to Louisiana. If she died of misery and despair, it mattered little, provided the projects of La Jonquière and his gang were frustrated by this arbitrary proceeding. Thus reasoned Jean Larfaille, and yet, if any one had touched a hair of the head of his adopted daughter, he would have died to defend or avenge her. He thought of carrying off Violet, but he would not have allowed a hair of Gudule's head to be touched. The heart of a detective has such contradictions as these in it, but it must be admitted that a final scruple arose. Before executing the sentence which he had just pronounced in his own mind as regarded the poor girl, he wished to make sure that it was she, indeed, who had played the trick. "My dear

little one," said he to Gudule, "you must not be disturbed by a mere joke. The person who played it—for this pin belonged to a woman—wished to amuse herself rather than to wound me. I think I know who she is, and I will only punish her by making her feel sorry for her jest. She will regret her naughtiness if she is told that she made me bleed, and that I had the courage to say nothing. Will you undertake to tell her so yourself?"

"But that would be a falsehood," answered Gudule, "and you always told me not to lie."

Larfaille bit his lip. The young girl had by a single simple word shown the faulty side of his detective's trick. He did not wish that she should do anything to blush for, but he had his own idea to carry out. He tried to think of some other course which would allow him to accomplish his purpose without wounding Gudule's delicate susceptibility. "There is no falsehood in this," said he, eagerly, "and Heaven forbid that I should ever bid you say what is false! I merely wish to utilise you to give a good lesson to a giddy girl, and to effect that it will suffice for you to say that you bring back the pin which she meant to use so cruelly. The sight of it will wound her more than all the reproaches in the world. But I won't hide from you, my child, that I am greatly interested in keeping the secret of my disguise to myself. It is the duty of a detective to wear disguises of all sorts, and I ought not to allow any one to know that I do so, for it would be breaking an oath to the King. You must not let this girl know that I had a false hump."

"How can I prevent it?"

"You must say to her: 'My father bade me say to you, "Why did you try to harm me?" and to give you this pin.' You can add: 'He never tried to injure you.' You must not say a word more than that."

"But if she should urge me to talk or question me, what then?"

"You must not reply, you must go away and come and tell me how she looked. I am sure that she will look confused at sight of the pin, and I wish to know whether she does or not."

"Well, then, father, I will do what you wish in order to satisfy you," replied Gudule. "Where shall I find the girl?"

"At some distance from here; in the Allée de Venise, near the Rue Quincampoix."

"I know where you mean. I often go there to carry back the linen of one of my customers, a clerk who lives in the house where the offices of the India Company are."

"Very well, You must go to-morrow morning, and after you cross the Rue Quincampoix, you will see a seamstress seated at a stand."

"Is that the girl?"

"Yes. That is the little hussy who played me the trick. She can say that she 'mended my stockings' in a very smart way. She must have profited by her chance when she found herself behind me."

"It is very wrong to mock at an unfortunate man like that."

"Very wrong, little girl! To punish her you must go up to her softly and choose a time when she is alone, so as not to humiliate her before other people; and when you are quite close to her, you——"

"I must give her the pin and say what you told me," said Gudule, smiling. "That is easily done, father, and you shall see that I will do it in the right way."

"I do not doubt that, my dear child," replied the detective, who was

delighted at having persuaded Gudule to go, "but I want you to return here at once, for I shall be impatient."

"Can't I return by the Rue Saint-Antoine?" said Gudule, timidly.

"What for?" asked Larfaille, with some surprise.

"To carry back the linen that belongs to—to Master La Perrelle's lodger. As you told me not to continue doing it I wish—for the last time to—to—"

"The lodger of the mercer in the Rue Saint-Antoine? Do you mean the man who calls himself a chevalier?" asked the detective, frowning.

Gudule blushed, and made a sign of assent. Her adopted father, instead of giving her the asked-for permission, began to pace up and down the room, looking very much disturbed. Then, suddenly stopping before her, he took her hand, kissed her upon the brow, and said: "You are right, my girl. You mustn't keep the chevalier's cravats and cuffs. Come here at once, when you have returned the pin, and we will go together to see Master La Perrelle's lodger. I am very anxious to know the young man."

VI.

THE next day, Gudule was up early, and hastily prepared her father's chocolate, before setting out to fulfil the singular mission which he had given her. The poor girl had slept but badly. Her young heart had beaten fast when, on the evening before, Larfaille, as he kissed her on bidding her good-night, had told her he would take her to see M. Lestang, the lodger of Master La Perrelle. Time had seemed long since the severe injunction which had kept her from going to see her customer in the Rue Saint-Antoine. She was incapable of disobeying Larfaille, but she was very unwilling to conform to his orders. It seemed to her that something was wanting in her life, and yet the mysterious chevalier who lodged at the mercer's, and who took up her thoughts to so great an extent, had never been seen by her oftener than once or twice a week, and then for ten minutes at the most. But how kindly he had always spoken to her! How smilingly he had welcomed her when she made her appearance with her small parcel of lace newly laundered, and with what delicate courtesy he had treated her, the poor cripple who so often met with mockery and rudeness! In what a gentle voice would he say: "Good-bye, my child; come again soon," when she went off, charmed with his kindness, taking away his cuffs and frills, with happiness enough for a week to come. Before she had known this incomparable M. Lestang she had never experienced such emotion. She lived the life of a delicate and timid girl, without any other thought than that of her home in the Rue Pont-aux-Choux, any other joy than that of welcoming her adoptive father, or any wish beyond his safe return. Now, it seemed to her that all was gay, and that her soul had expanded to other feelings under the influence of new emotions; that her heart, benumbed before, was now awakening. She felt as though a sun had risen in the dark sky of life. That sun was M. Lestang; the darkness was her past. She knew with what feelings she had lived, but she did not understand what she now felt. It is easy to surmise with what grief she had listened to Larfaille, when he had told her that she must give up working for M. Lestang, and how delighted she had been when he talked of going to see him. The errand regarding the pin which had annoyed her at first, now seemed a pleasant walk. She

was dressed to start before the day had fairly dawned, and with joy in her face, her eyes sparkling with impatience, she hurried on her preparations for an early breakfast.

Larfaille had not slept well, either. He was dissatisfied with himself, and with everybody, and for the first time since he had begun trying to find the colonel and his gang, he admitted that he had failed in his undertaking. He especially reproached himself with not having posted one or two men as sentinels at the end of the Allée de Venise. Had he done so, the flower-girl's lover would not have been able to escape him, and vanish like a ghost in the darkness. Now, all must be begun over again ; but he had formed his plans anew, and the return of his adopted daughter would be the signal for setting to work. He thought of the so-called chevalier almost as often as did Gudule. He saw that love had entered into this acquaintanceship, and the idea greatly disturbed him, for it had never occurred to him that the young girl would ever love any one but her father ; he had never supposed that her young heart would some day make itself heard. He was, although he did not admit it to himself, very jealous of Gudule's affection, and greatly annoyed that she should feel a warmer love—especially for an unknown man—than that which she felt for him. Who was this person who wore Flanders lace, and yet lived in a garret in the Rue Saint-Antoine ? He must find out, and as quickly as he could.

He felt some remorse at employing Gudule as a spy, but he consoled himself with the thought that she ran no risk, and besides, he must use what means he could command. So he kissed her tenderly, bade her make all possible haste, and then let her go. The young girl went away with a light heart, and walked rapidly towards the Rue Quincampoix. Simply, almost shabbily dressed, and walking with downcast eyes, she passed close to the walls as she went, and attracted little attention. She went through the crowd in front of the offices of the Mississippi Company without exciting any remark whatever, and in less than half an hour after her departure she came to the Allée de Venise, and saw at a glance the stand of which her father had spoken. She did not yet see the seamstress who was within, because she was hidden by the form of a man who stood before her. This man was standing with his back to Gudule, and was engaged in a very animated conversation with the linen-mender. Gudule thought that it was one of her customers haggling over terms with her, and as Larfaille had told her not to give the pin to the girl in any one's presence, she slackened her pace so as to give the speaker time to settle his account and go away. But he was so busy talking that he did not hear the approach of the detective's emissary ; still less did he see her. However, as the poor girl drew near, she thought that she recognised both his figure and his voice. A prey to indescribable emotion, she wished to pause, and yet something within her urged her on. When she was about five or six paces from him she heard him say in a voice that stirred her very soul : "Violet, you cannot hesitate any longer. I stake my life to-night : to-night you must go with me, if you do not wish that we should be separated for ever."

Gudule turned pale, and stopped as though turned to stone by surprise. The seamstress uttered a few words which she could not catch, and then the man resumed : "You say that you love me, Violet, and yet instead of consenting to do as I ask you, you reproach me because I have run the risk of being arrested in order to come here to speak with you for the last time ! What matters my liberty to me, what matters my life if

you refuse to hear my entreaties, if you abandon me, you whom I love with all my soul?"

This was too much for Gudule to hear unmoved. She gave utterance to a stifled cry, and the man hearing it turned round. The poor girl's heart had not deceived her. He whom she had heard expressing his love for another woman in terms so ardent was M. Lestang, the young cavalier who spoke so mildly, whose remembrance filled her heart, whose image was ever before her eyes. She experienced the deepest, the most cruel grief—it was as though something had given way in her heart—and, tottering as if about to fall, she closed her eyes so as to shut out from her sight the form she loved so well. The first impulse of Violet's lover was to hold out his arms to prevent the poor creature from falling to the ground, but he now recognised her, and it was his turn to feel surprised. He hesitated for an instant, as he did not wish to go away; but he did so as soon as he had whispered to Violet: "This young girl knows where I live. She does not know my real name. She must not know it. Try to deceive her, and to find out why she has come here. I will come for you at nightfall, and I rely upon your consent to go with me, unless you mean to drive me to despair."

He then strode off towards the Rue Quincampoix, and mingled with the crowd. The two young girls soon found themselves face to face. Who shall say what Violet felt at finding herself alone with a young girl whom she had never seen before, and who had produced so strange an effect upon the Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré by appearing before him? Both she and Gudule were silent, and exchanged surprised and mistrustful glances. They felt that they were rivals, although they did not know to what fatal chance their meeting was thus due. Violet was the least disturbed, for the chevalier had but just breathed to her declarations of ardent love, and little by little she felt drawn towards the poor misshapen young girl whose eyes expressed such deep sadness. But Gudule, the unfortunate Gudule, roused from her fond dreams, wounded to the heart, stood gazing at the exquisite creature whom the chevalier idolised, and could not but admire her beauty. Both girls were silent, and yet each longed to end the now intolerable situation. Gudule was the first to speak, and break the agonising stillness. She did not dare to allude to M. Lestang's presence in the Allée de Venise; she knew but too well, now, how to account for it, but she must fulfil her mission, and availed herself of the welcome fact that she had something ready to say. "My father," said she, hastily, "told me to give you this, and to ask you why you tried to harm him who never attempted to injure you?"

At the same moment she held out in her trembling hand the pin which she had taken from her corsage. This thrust took effect, and the experiment could not have succeeded better. Violet did not understand at first but mechanically held out her hand for the pin which Gudule extended to her. Almost immediately she remembered, and then with great distress conjectured that the girl before her must be the hunchback's daughter. She turned pale, and was so confused that she could not find a word to say. She had not the courage either to deny the accusation or to return the pin. Indeed, in addition to the astonishment which she felt at finding that what she had done was known—she was in consternation at the thought that she had committed an act of cruelty in wounding a poor cripple, for the girl before her was misshapen, and might, indeed, have a hunchback for a father, and that father might not be a spy. If she could have dis-

tinctly and at once recalled what had occurred in the tavern she would have remembered that if the pin had really entered the poor old tramp's flesh he could not possibly have restrained a cry. Yet he had not flinched, and so much heroism could scarcely belong to a poor musician going his rounds. She would also have remembered that she had plainly detected "the grey coat" of the Rue Quincampoix, in spite of his ridiculous toggery. But Gudule did not give Violet time to recall all this. The poor girl had seen enough to believe her mission fulfilled, and longed to get away. Her heart was overflowing with bitterness. She looked once more at her rival's charming features to fix them in her memory, and then hurried off.

She passed through the crowd without being noticed, and hastened homeward. Her gait was quite different from what it had been when she had hurried gaily along, her heart as light as her feet, making all haste to execute her father's orders, and happy at thinking that he was about to take her to M. Lestang's lodgings. She now walked along with down-cast eyes, sometimes stopping and tottering, as though beneath a weight of grief. Then, again, she would hurry on, seeing and hearing nothing. It seemed as though the wind bore her along as the autumn blast scatters the dead leaves. She found herself in front of her house without knowing how she had reached it, and was scarcely able to drag herself up the stairs, for her strength had left her.

Larfaille was waiting for her, seated at the little black-walnut table where he usually sat when writing his reports for the head of the police, and he was making use of his leisure to draw up various orders of arrest to be signed that day. He thought that he would soon require them, and wished to have them ready, just as a soldier likes to have his gun clean before battle. His face lighted up when he saw Gudule enter. "Ah! here you are," said he, as he rose and went towards her; "you have made haste, I see. I did not expect you back so soon. Did you find the girl?"

"I found her, father, where you told me she would be," replied the little messenger.

"Aha! and how did the interview go off?"

"As you thought it would, father. I gave her the pin, saying what you bade me say. Her hand trembled as she took it, she blushed, and was about to speak, but could not find a word to say."

"There can be no doubt, then. It was she!" exclaimed Larfaille. "She did not question you at all, then?"

"No."

"And you went away without adding a word?"

"Yes."

"She did not call you back, or run after you?"

"No, father, she did not stir."

"That is as it should be," cried the detective, joyfully, as he began rubbing his hands together. "You do not know what a service you have rendered me, my girl, and I cannot explain it to you. This question is a political one, and would not interest you. But I owe you a reward and I will not make you wait for it. If you are not too tired we will go at once to visit your friend."

"My friend?" repeated Gudule, in a voice of agony.

"Yes, the young man who wears such rich lace—what is his name?—ah, yes! M. Lestang."

"He!" cried the young girl, placing her hand on her heart, and adding in a stifled tone: "No, father, I do not wish to see him again."

"Why not?" demanded Larfaillé, for the first time remarking Gudule's pallor.

"Because—I have seen him."

"When?—where?"

"Just now—down there—standing beside that woman."

"The woman to whom you gave the pin?"

"Yes, father. He was telling her that he was about to run a great risk, and begging her to go away with him—he was swearing that he loved her, and—" The rest was lost in a sob.

At any other time Larfaillé, before aught else, would surely have thought of consoling his daughter, but he was so agitated that he seized her by the arm and demanded in a curt, almost harsh tone: "What is this man's appearance?"

"He is tall and slender," muttered Gudule, in alarm.

"With an oval face, an aquiline nose, a fair complexion, and blue eyes?"

"Yes."

"And he talked of danger and of love to that girl?"

Gudule made a sign of assent. She had not the courage to reply to a question which made her heart bleed. "How could you hear what he was saying?" asked Larfaillé.

"He did not see me, because he was occupied with her. He did not hear me come up, and when he turned, I was close to him."

"What did he do then?"

"He started with surprise, or perhaps alarm. Then he beat over her, whispered something, and hastened away."

"You say that it is really the person who lives at Master La Perrelle's, who is called Lestang, and who was one day addressed in your presence as 'Chevalier'?"

"It is he indeed!" sighed Gudule.

"Ah!" exclaimed the detective, with a burst of triumph. "I have them all, then, and Desgrais is avenged!"

"What do you say, father?" demanded Gudule, terrified. "Whom are you going to arrest? Who is avenged?"

"No one, my girl; these things relate to my duties, and you cannot understand what I mean," Larfaillé made haste to reply. He could easily give an evasive answer like this, as he had never told his adopted daughter any of his professional secrets, and was much too prudent to have ever spoken before her of the tragic fate of his comrade, Desgrais. But love enlightens the simplest soul, and Gudule loved. She easily guessed that her father had some design against M. Lestang. Had she not, besides, heard the handsome cavalier say that he was in great danger?

What danger could it be? Who threatened his life and liberty? What crime could he have committed? Gudule was unable to guess, but a secret instinct told her that she had now, unwittingly, injured her friend, and this thought drove her to despair. She had been suffering cruelly through him for the last hour, but she bitterly reproached herself for having betrayed him, for in her heart's depths she still cherished him. While she was lost in conjecture the detective believed that he had gone too far and too fast. Not that he hesitated in running down the chevalier whose name and abode chance had made known to him. He was triumphant, on the contrary, because he had now found that his suppositions were true in every respect, for he was certain that Violet's handsome lover was a conspirator. But to this providential discovery was added another which

touched the detective more closely. He saw that Gudule was in love, and more seriously than he had thought at first, with La Perrelle's handsome lodger, and he found that this young man was in a position which would place him in the Bastille. This was an excellent chance for Larfaillle to put an end to a budding passion which could have no result but that of troubling the peace of mind of his beloved daughter. He had only—so he supposed—to arrest the gallant to restore Gudule's tranquillity of mind, and this he resolved to do at once. But not for all the money in the world, nor for all that could be accomplished by any arrest, would he have grieved the poor girl, whom he blamed himself for having exposed to sorrow by sending her to return the pin. He therefore made haste to repair, as it were, the effects of his imprudent words: "I have them!" and his allusion to Desgrais' murder. "Let us leave all this, my child," said he, drawing Gudule to his breast. "From the description you gave me, I thought that I recognised one of my friends from Flanders, and I was afraid that he had come to Paris unknown to his father, which would have obliged me to interfere to bring him back to the path of duty; but I am mistaken, for I remember now that my man from Flanders cannot speak French. So it cannot be he who is called Lestang. As for the man who bears that name, we won't go to see him to-day, as you don't wish it. You must be tired after walking this morning, and I want you to take care of your health. What should I do if you fell ill?"

In speaking thus, Larfaillle was sincere, and Gudule, who knew it well, threw her arms around his neck and wept. But he was not sincere in adding: "What is deferred is not lost, and we shall make the visit whenever you like. I am anxious to know Master La Perrelle's lodger. However, I cannot truly spare time to-day, for I have a great task on hand and am obliged to go out, and shall not, perhaps, return till late. Go to rest, my dear Gudule, and promise me not to grieve any more about nothing."

Broken down with sorrow and fatigue, Gudule was only too glad to be alone. She tenderly kissed her father, and repaired to her own room adjoining her father's. As soon as she had closed the door Larfaillle's face and manner changed completely. Dismissing the air of sadness which he had assumed in speaking to his daughter, he drew himself up like a man who is satisfied with his own acts, and made ready to go out. "Yes, I hold them now," he repeated, between his teeth. "I may say it, now that Gudule is no longer by; the most urgent matter is to capture the so-called Lestang. He must have gone home when he left the Allée de Venise. He must be there still, or, if not, I shall soon post some of my men at Master La Perrelle's, so as to catch him when he returns; I only need go to the Grand Châtelet, get my squad together and repair to the Rue Saint-Antoine—in an hour or two Lestang will be in prison, and through him we shall hold the rest of them, for once in prison he can be made to speak." Meanwhile, Larfaillle put on his coat, threw his cloak over his shoulders, and stuck his hat on his head; but just as he was about to go out he remembered Gudule and said in a low tone: "Poor girl! who would have thought it? She was beginning to fall in love with that fellow. It will be a lesson to me. I shall not let her go to customers' houses any more. Yet what grief she will feel when she finds that Lestang has disappeared from his lodgings, and that she will see him no more." The detective paused for a moment, as he thought of all this, and then murmured, snapping his fingers: "What a fool I am to trouble

myself about that ! I will tell her he has run away with the seamstress ; she will be grieved at first, and then she will forget him."

Encouraged by this conclusion Larfaillé went towards the door, but there was a gentle tap outside at the moment when he placed his hand upon the knob. Somewhat surprised—for he scarcely ever had a visitor—the detective hastily opened the door and beheld a personage whom he had little thought of seeing—Venier, the private secretary of Dubois, the prime minister. " You here, sir !" exclaimed he, bowing down to the ground ; " this is a great honour for me, and I do not know to what to attribute it."

" Let me come in and close the door again," said the secretary, quietly. Larfaillé at once obeyed. " Are we alone here ? " asked Venier.

" Yes, sir, and I will—"

" Listen to me, pray, for I am in a hurry, as you too will be when you have heard. I came from monseigneur to tell you that to-night—"

" To-night ! " repeated the detective, with a somewhat surprised air.

" Yes. Monseigneur has succeeded in finding out that the Duke of Orleans intends going at midnight to the plain of Vanves with the pretended Commander Baroni, who has promised to make the fiend appear to his Royal Highness. Monseigneur was not altogether able to penetrate the mystery of this adventurer's true personality ; but he is persuaded that the Regent is the dupe of a skilful and very dangerous impostor ; he is inclined to think that the so-called Baroni may really be Colonel La Jonquière in person. Be that as it may, the minister is anxious that the chance should not be lost, and I have orders to take you with me at once to the Palais Royal, where he will give you his orders himself."

" I am at your disposal, sir," replied Larfaillé, " but, on my side, I have discovered the lair of one of these rascals, and was making ready to go and capture him. If you see fit I will finish this important undertaking, and then repair to the Palais Royal."

" Not at all ! not at all ! " said Venier, very decisively ; " the execution of the minister's orders will not admit of the least delay, and you must go with me at once."

" But, sir, I have reason to believe that this man is one of those whom it is important to arrest, and if he has time to get away—"

" That does not concern me, and you can tell monseigneur yourself. Besides, this way of acting might spoil everything by alarming the conspirators, and it seems to me to be wiser to wait till night to catch them all at one time. Come, I tell you ! "

There was no replying to this, and Larfaillé did not attempt to convince the envoy of the all-powerful minister. He already began to realise that Dubois might be right, and that it would be wiser to defer matters a little longer so as to obtain more decisive and complete success. " I will go with you, sir," said he to the private secretary.

A moment later they both took their seats in a coach which was waiting at the entrance of the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux, and Gudule stole softly from her room where she had not, as her father believed, been sleeping.

While Larfaillé was rolling along towards the Palais Royal in Venier's coach, Chevalier du Terne, in his humble lodgings in the Rue Saint-Antoine, was conversing with Colonel La Jonquière. The detective had been right when he proposed to the secretary to arrest all whom he might find at La Perrelle's house. It would have been a great piece of good luck to him, and would have put an end to the conspiracy and the conspirators. But

fate ordained otherwise. After the scene in the Allée de Venise, Terne had, as Larfaile supposed, returned home in hot haste. The colonel was waiting for him at the door, disguised, this time, as a common soldier of the Guards, for it was a rule of his never to show himself two days together in the same attire. The financier, the invalid officer, the magistrate, and all La Jonquière's other supposed individualities, had been merged into one who wore a white coat, a hat with a curled brim, and a sword. Lestang easily recognised the guard, accosted him like a young citizen who was pleased to talk to a soldier, and took him forthwith to his own rooms. The shopkeeper, who rented him three rooms, did not trouble himself about him save on pay-days. The friends, therefore, felt sure that they would not be disturbed, and could talk over their affairs as long as it pleased them to do so. It was not their first interview that day, for the colonel had already called to announce great tidings to the chevalier.

The Regent having received his former comrade in the Italian army, Commander Angelo Baroni, that morning, had declared to him that he did not wish any longer to defer the promised interview with the fiend. He had gone so far as to confide his infernal friendships, so to speak, to Madame de Parabère, and the marchioness had derided him ever since, and had declared that the evocation would end in smoke. Philip, put upon his mettle, had summoned his friend the magician to keep his word ; and the magician, who could not get out of the difficulty, was obliged to promise him an interview, that very evening, with the Prince of Darkness. It is superfluous to add that La Jonquière and Baroni were one and the same ; but it is necessary to mention how the colonel had succeeded in so perfectly assuming the personality of an old Italian major, formerly well known to the Duke of Orleans. Before conspiring, La Jonquière had served a good deal, and he had formerly been very intimate in Parma with the real Commander Baroni, who had not failed to tell him, with many details, of his past relations with the nephew of his Majesty Louis XIV. From this somewhat distant recollection had sprung the boldest plan that ever arose in the brain of a political plotter. The colonel had determined to present himself before the Regent under the name and with the appearance of his former companion at arms. He had a prodigious memory, presence of mind for any emergency, and, above all, great talent in making up a face or figure at will. Philip of Orleans, with his frankness, his indiscriminate good will, his ease of approach, and taste for the society of the officers who had served with him in the wars of Italy and Spain, was more likely than any other man to fall into such a snare, and, in point of fact, he did fall into it, and easily. His love of the supernatural did the rest. The great day, therefore, had now come, and the plot was approaching a conclusion.

The colonel had not thought it so near at hand, and the Regent's orders took him somewhat aback, for he now had scarcely time to call his men together and prepare everything for the abduction. But he took care not to demur. That would have caused the Duke of Orleans to doubt his powers as a wizard, and the chance once gone might never recur. Besides, the principal measures had long been taken, the post-chaise was in readiness, and the relays ordered under pretence of an extraordinary courier whom the Spanish ambassador had occasion to send to his King. It was only necessary to call the conspirators together, and tell each one what he had to do. Now, the colonel was a very active man, and the day was amply sufficient for his final measures. He began by going to inform Terne, and left him to pass the word among his remaining accomplices,

saying that he should return when all were ready to obey, and he did return towards noon. Between La Jonquière's two visits, the chevalier had sought out Violet to persuade her to go away with him, and he would perhaps have succeeded had not Gudule suddenly appeared and put an end to the interview. He had returned to his lodgings about a quarter-of-an-hour—greatly troubled at this disappointment—and was telling the colonel of the occurrence. The latter, after listening attentively, said to him quietly: “My dear captain, if we disturbed ourselves about such trifles as this we should never act, and it would not be worth while to conspire. The thing must be done to-night. To-night the play must be acted, the actors are ready, and I rely upon great success in spite of the folly of this misshapen girl, of whom you tell me.”

“I think with you, colonel, that it would be difficult to defer matters any longer, and dangerous besides,” replied Terne, “and yet the meeting with this girl alarms me. What could she have to say to a person whom she does not know, whose existence she was not even aware of, it would seem, as she lives in this neighbourhood, far away from the Rue Quiucampoix?”

“Bah! she had some mending to take her, or some such matter. I repeat it, chevalier, we have greater anxieties at the present moment than this affair, but you must confess that you are to blame, and that your interview in the open air with that young girl, your sweetheart, was very imprudent.”

“How do you make that out?” demanded Terne, with an air of vexation.

“It was imprudent for many reasons. In the first place, time is precious to-day, and you might have made a better use of it; and besides that, you know very well that the girl is watched. I need no other proof of that than the attempt to carry her off the other day, which attempt, had I not interfered, would have cost us dear, not to speak of the hunch-back whom I suspect of having come to spy upon us, yesterday, for he took good care not to keep the appointment which I made with him in front of Paris du Vernet's house. I must now ask you, captain, whether you still persist in wishing to take Blanche-Barbe's daughter with you?”

“I have made up my mind to that, colonel; but I do not yet know whether she will consent.”

“I must warn you that her father will be very angry.”

“That matters little to me. That man cannot follow us to Spain.”

“No; but have you thought of the great trouble which it will be to have a woman riding on horseback behind us?”

“I will take care of her, and I can protect her without help. Besides, colonel, I must ask you to say no more on this point. My resolve is firm.”

“Ah, chevalier! chevalier!” sighed La Jonquière, “you are young, and you don't see danger ahead like an old *reiter* such as I am. You forget that a woman can upset the best-laid plots. But, after all, I was like you at your age, and it would not become me to preach to you. Let the matter go and let us settle our plans for the night.” Terne nodded. “You know,” resumed the colonel, “that it is I—disguised as Angelo Baroni of happy memory—who am to take Philip to the spot where he will find such good company to receive him. You must take my place, and command the men who will be in ambush at the quarry. Lorenzo de Mille, with the rest of the troop, will take charge of the post-chaise and horses, which will be read yon the Châtillon road. You know the ground too well to make any mistake, do you not?”

"I went to reconnoitre the spot last week, and I could go to the Vanves quarry with my eyes closed."

"Very well. I shall reach the place, I now think, a little before midnight; but you would do well to be at your post at ten o'clock, so as to have time to get everything ready for noiseless and prompt action. I will myself instruct our men to go there in groups of two or three at a time. That is the best way to avoid attracting attention."

"This all seems well planned, but have you thought of Count de Horn? Has he been informed?"

"Yes, indeed. If, by ill luck, things turned out badly, the count would be very useful to us, and I cannot do without him. I sent Mille to him to tell him that we were waiting for him, and to give him all the information necessary to reach the appointed spot: it is better that Count de Horn should go there without us. As for the duel by night to which he wishes to challenge Philip of Orleans, that is another matter, and I will undertake to arrange it on the spot. The important point is that, in case of misfortune, we have the son of a prince as our accomplice, a man allied to a royal house and to the Regent himself."

"The fact is, that to save so noble a head they will perhaps be obliged to spare ours."

"That is my belief," growled out the colonel. "And now, chevalier, that all is settled, good-bye till to-night, and may the fiend, whom the Regent is so desirous of seeing, bring us good luck!"

"Till to-night, then, colonel! Rely upon me as upon yourself."

"I do," replied La Jonquière, rising, "and I hope that to-morrow by this time Philip of Orleans may be thirty miles from Paris, on the road to the realms of his cousin, the King of Spain."

* * * * *

Every medal has two sides, and by chance sometimes one scene matches well with another. At the very hour when La Jonquière and the chevalier were arranging their last plans for carrying off the Regent, Dubois was giving Larfaille final instructions for frustrating the criminal projects of his master's enemies. The detective, in company with Venier, had reached the Palais Royal at the very moment when Terne met the colonel in front of La Perrelle's shop. The minister was awaiting Larfaille, and received him without leaving him to dance attendance in the ante-room. "Well!" he shouted, as soon as he caught sight of him, "I am more cunning than you are, for I have caught the rogues after whom you are still running."

"Monseigneur," modestly replied Larfaille, "I well knew that I should not accomplish anything without your help."

"Yes, yes," stuttered Dubois: "when I become a policeman I do things better than that pedantic Argenson. I do not need to call out the watch or the marshalsea; I have discovered the conspirators without going out of my room."

"M. Venier has just told me, monseigneur, that you were aware of the projects to be carried out to-night."

"It was not without trouble that I found out what they were, and if I had not gained over the Regent's valet, Coche, I should never have known that the duke had made up his mind to go to-night to the plains of Vanves to see the fiend—for he took good care to tell me nothing himself."

“Then the pretended commander had the presumption to present himself before the Duke of Orleans again?”

“He did, the ruffian!”

“And you let him go, monseigneur? You suffered him to leave the Palais Royal?”

“In the first place, he was off and away before I knew that he had come here, and it would not have done any good to arrest him then. I preferred to let him plunge still further into what he wishes to do, and to catch him in the very act, with all his accomplices.”

“Of course; but it might have been as well to have had him followed during the day,” said the detective, who preferred the usual course of action.

“I repeat that I was warned too late for that, and it is even a miracle that I heard of the thing. It was only through the countermanaging of the Regent’s order for a supper at which the marchioness, Nocé, Brancas, Canillac, Simiane, and the rest were, as usual, to be present; and besides, he ordered a plain suit and his fighting sword to be got ready for him. Then Coche, who is no fool, made him talk, and skilfully drew from him an admission that he was about to do this crazy thing. Finally Coche decided to come to me with the news. Baroni is to wait for the duke at ten o’clock, at the Croix du Trahoir, to take him to a quarry not far from the village of Vanves—a quarry called the Carrière des Gloriettes.”

“I know exactly where it is, monseigneur. It was used for a long time as a retreat by a band of robbers whom I formerly discovered, and with whom I had a deal of trouble.”

“Very well. You can take your measures, then, with full knowledge of what had better be done. Come, how will you arrest all these people at once? I do not wish one to escape, remember.”

“And not one shall escape. I know ambushes in the neighbourhood of the Gloriettes quarry which are the very places for hiding my men. They shall be there by nightfall. I have reason to believe that the conspirators will have a travelling-carriage in readiness somewhere near. So I shall send five or six of my men to find out about that, and will choose them among the most able. I will dress them as peasants. They shall have orders to bar the Châtillon road after sunset. That is the road, without doubt, by which the Regent’s enemies will despatch the post-chaise on the road to Orleans. The rascals cannot take a step without being arrested at once.”

“That is very well planned, my man; but who is to arrest this Baroni, whom I suspect to be La Jonquière?”

“If you see fit, monseigneur, I will arrest him. But it had better not be on the road near the Croix du Trahoir.”

“Why not?”

“Because if he were indeed the colonel, he would attempt to resist.”

“Ah! you are afraid, it seems, then?”

“Not for myself, monseigneur, but the person of the Duke of Orleans ought not to be exposed, and as Baroni most likely will not show himself till his Highness appears——”

“I see! You are right! I had not thought of that. What is to be done?”

“The best way would be to induce the Regent to abstain from going to the meeting-place, and to send an equerry of his height and general appearance.”

"Impossible! I know Philip. He would never agree to that stratagem. He is crazy about calling up Satan, and he believes in the loyalty of the commander, just as he does in the fidelity of Madame de Parabère. You must think of something better."

"Well, then, monseigneur, I will post one of my men at the Croix du Trahoir with two assistants. This man, who is my second self, will see the meeting. The assistants will be men experienced in tracking people, and will keep close to the so-called Italian and the Regent, and watch them till they see them go down into the Gloriettes quarry. In this way, if, during the walk, Baroni changes his manner of acting or attacks the Regent, his Highness will have assistance at once."

"That is not badly planned, although it is really madness to suffer the Regent of France to enter upon any such adventure. But how are we to help it? If I undertook to remonstrate with him, he would laugh at me and do as he pleased."

"My plan has one other advantage," resumed Larfaille. "If, as I believe, we really have La Jonquière to deal with, we should never, by arresting him alone, be able to learn anything whatever about his accomplices. He is a man to defy torture and to remain silent on the very scaffold. But if he were captured in the midst of his band, he could no longer deny. And this is not all. It may be that the others have orders to conceal themselves near the quarry, and only to appear when a signal is given by their leader. If the colonel does not appear the scoundrels will remain concealed, and yet my men must capture them."

"All this appears to me to be well reasoned out. Tell me, now, how you intend to proceed."

"Well, it is very simple. My troop, as I have already told you, will be divided into platoons, well hidden and within call. I will remain at the bottom of the quarry in a certain corner with which I am well acquainted, as I have hidden myself there before, and I defy the fiend himself to find out where it is, even though he came in the colonel's skin. According to all appearances matters will take this course: Baroni will conduct the duke to the border of the hole, help him down into it, and once there will whistle for his men, but I will whistle, too, and I'll venture to say that La Jonquière's gang will find themselves mastered."

"Good! but if the scamp, seeing that he is discovered, should attempt to stab the Regent or shoot him, what then?"

"I have foreseen that, monseigneur, and I will receive the blow, for, when I give the signal I shall take care to throw myself between the duke and La Jonquière, whom I shall seize by the body and will undertake to hold."

This was said so simply that Dubois was touched by Larfaille's modest heroism and quiet devotion. "I see that I was fortunate in selecting you," said he, in a milder tone, "and I see nothing in your plans to change. Go, do as you think fit, and return to-night with the news that the colonel and his gang are captured. You shall receive a thousand pistoles."

"My lord, I shall be sufficiently rewarded if I content you and avenge my friend Desgrais."

"Good! good! that is well said, but money will do no harm, and you shall receive your thousand pistoles to-morrow morning, if you succeed. It is clearly understood that you answer for the safety of the Duke of Orleans?"

"On my life," replied Larfaille, boldly.

"That is enough. You have no time to lose in spreading the net for La Jonquière and his band."

The detective bowed low and went off, while Dubois, striding up and down his room, muttered: "Ah! M. de Schlieben, you wish to take up M. de Cellamare's affairs! It will cost you dearly, secret agent though you are of the Emperor of Germany! You, your master, and the King of Spain shall see what it costs to come into contact with me, though I am but the son of an apothecary."

VII.

It was very dark when, at a little before ten at night, Larfaillé arrived at Vanves, outside Paris. It may well be believed that he had not lost his time that day. On leaving the prime minister he had gone at once to the Châtelet in order to speak with his assistant, the detective whom he had already employed to watch over the approaches of the Epée de Bois. Thanks to the zealous aid of this intelligent underling, it did not require an hour to collect a squad of picked men to whom he gave clear and precise orders. Larfaillé's lieutenant was told to watch the Croix du Trahoir cross-road, and to follow with two strong men at a short distance behind the Regent and his friend, the commander. The others disguised, some as peasants, some as citizens, and others as horse-dealers and beggars, were told to distribute themselves over the plain and choose hiding-places. The general order was that they should post themselves so as to surround the quarry as soon as their leader whistled twice, which was the signal agreed upon. They must walk separately about the neighbourhood as long as daylight lasted, and watch all who entered and left Vanves, Châtillon, and other places round about, and observe their actions and appearance; then at nightfall they must hide. This was a delicate and difficult task, but they were well able to carry out the orders given them, for they were zealous and skilful, veterans in the business, and up to all the emergencies that might arise. Besides, in the case of success, each was to receive fifty pistoles. At this price, the fellows would have arrested the King of Spain himself.

Having thus prepared his trap for the conspirators, Larfaillé employed his remaining time in making a few needful preparations in case of death, and wrote two letters; one to the lawyer with whom he had placed his savings, to tell him Gudule's name and address, and inform him that she was his lawful heiress; the other to Dubois, the prime minister, begging him not to abandon her if left an orphan. He entrusted both missives to a bailiff, who was a friend of his, and made him promise to leave them at their address early on the morrow, if in the course of the day he did not appear to reclaim them.

He thought of bidding farewell to Gudule; but this would have saddened him, and it was no time for giving way to his feelings, as he needed all his energy and coolness. So he arrayed himself at his friend the bailiff's, borrowing an ample cloak, a strong hunting-knife, and a pair of pistols, which he took care to load. As for his whistle, he always kept that about him. His watch at the quarry might prove a long one, the night was cold, and it was well to be prepared. Thus armed against all emergencies, Gudule's adoptive father dined soberly and left the Châtelet at dusk. He had a long distance to walk to reach the appointed trysting.

place, and did not wish to hurry. He went on slowly, crossed the Seine by the Pont-Neuf, reached the Chartreux Convent and then Montrouge, passed on, turned to the right, and arrived on the plain of Vanves.

In our day, this flat expanse on the south of Paris offers but an uninviting aspect. At that time it was absolutely a desert, pitted with quarries, and people seldom ventured there after sunset, so the detective did not encounter any one. As he had told Dubois, he knew the spot well enough not to lose his way, and in spite of the darkness he easily reached the Gloriettes quarry. However, as he proceeded to the edge of the gap, he suddenly tripped against the body of a man, who quickly rose up. He was about to put himself on the defensive, when a voice said in a low tone, "We are at our posts. All is well."

The detective agent had trodden upon one of his own men, and the fellow had recognised him, although it was night. "Good! be ready for the whistle," said Larfaille, in a low voice to his subordinate, who immediately replaced himself in a furrow as before.

The Gloriettes quarry differed from the others round about in being approached by an easy slope, which admitted of very comfortable walking in coming from Paris. There was no other passage besides this path; the edges were steep, the excavation deep and funnel-shaped. The place, in a word, looked like a cut-throat spot, and had had a bad reputation at all times, as it served as a refuge for the robbers of the suburbs, and more than one crime had been committed there.

Larfaille, however, entered unhesitatingly, and when once he reached the bottom, went to hide behind a huge block of sandstone. This mass had rolled there from the sides of the quarry, and covered a fissure in the rock which seemed to have resulted from the explosion of a mine. In this niche-like spot, sheltered by the huge block of stone, a man could easily conceal himself. "It is here," muttered the detective, "that I passed three nights in 1709 watching Arpalin and Petit Jacques, the two robbers whom I had the satisfaction of sending to the Place de Grève to be hanged. The place is a good one, and I hope that I shall be as lucky this time."

Larfaille had, indeed, many reasons for hoping, for all had gone on as well as can be imagined. His men were at their posts, and their vigilance was all that could be asked for, as he now saw. "Let us hope that the duke has not changed his mind," thought he, "and that nothing has happened to him on the way. No, no, the man whom I posted to watch over him is brave and active. There will be no danger during the journey. Here there is still less, as I am at hand, and I have all my men near by. All is well! La Jonquière may come when he likes; we shall get the best of him!" The detective, feeling quite encouraged, began to think over the details of his plan. If, as he did not doubt it, his instructions had been followed, his men must be aware of the spot where the colonel's band was, and all their measures must have been taken for surrounding the enemy as soon as they should appear. "I presume," said Larfaille, "that La Jonquière will warn his men by a whistle. That will be the moment for me to whistle too; but I shall not give the signal until I throw myself between him and the Duke of Orleans. If he springs upon me, I shall have only to blow out his brains."

He was pondering thus when a slight noise made him start. He listened and heard some one walking stealthily. "It is he," said he to himself, leaning upon the rock and protruding his head so as to listen more easily.

He waited with his neck stretched out, his ear attentive, and his heart firm. His hand was ready, and yet he felt great emotion, for he was about to risk his life. "This is strange," thought he, "I do not hear anything now, and yet I am sure that there was some one walking near by, a moment ago."

He listened again. The west wind was blowing above the quarry, but that was all. The detective concluded that he had been mistaken, and wished to resume his former position, for he was bent almost double with his body thrust forward. But he had not time to rise erect; before he could do so two strong arms encircled him from behind, a sack was passed over his head and tied around his neck. He at once instinctively endeavoured to get rid of the cord, which seemed to be strangling him. But two hands seized his wrists and held them like a vice. At the same time he felt that, outside the sack, a wide leather strap was being applied as a gag over his mouth. He could not move or utter a cry, and was garrotted and half suffocated. The whole thing had been done in a few seconds. Larfaille believed himself lost, and, to do him justice, he thought in this trying moment of Gudule, who would be left alone in the world, and of the Regent, who would now fall into the hands of his enemies. How the detective cursed his own imprudence in coming to the meeting-place alone, instead of bringing one or two of his men with him. At that moment he was lifted up and slung across the shoulders of some one who bore him away at a run. Where was he being carried? The path which went up to the plain was difficult of ascent for any one with such a burden, and, however strong he might be, the bearer would have been obliged to go more slowly had he followed that road. The detective, whose brain was still clear, concluded from this that he was being taken to some subterranean spot made in the ground below the quarry. "Madman that I have been!" he thought bitterly, "not to have guessed that the colonel and his gang had taken care to find an invisible retreat. How could I believe that these men would meet in the open-air in a plain where any one may pass? I ought to have come here before to examine the quarry myself instead of trusting to my recollections—and yet, eleven years ago, I arrested Arpalin and Petit Jacques, and I am sure that then there was no communication with any cavern."

This remembrance could not change the facts, however. Larfaille soon felt his legs knocking against walls which bruised him painfully, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. He was being carried through narrow passages such as are found inside a mine. He also felt that he was going down a somewhat abrupt slope, and—what was still more significant—despite the sack he felt the damp air peculiar to subterranean depths. "What are they going to do with me?" he wondered in anguish. A quick and violent death would have terrified him less than this passage through darkness, this mysterious descent into the unknown. Suddenly his abductors paused, a door turned upon its hinges, he heard a loud noise, and inhaled a sharp and sickening odour. He was then suddenly thrown upon the ground as though he had been a bale of goods, and the sack was removed from about him. He opened his eyes, and beheld a strange sight. Above him there was an immense vault, which reached far up into the darkness; and he found that he was in a vast cavern feebly lighted by the smoky wicks of some iron lamps fastened to huge pillars of sandstone which rose up at intervals. On the right and left and in front of him were tables of rough boards, broken barrels, some of them

upright and others on their sides, and benches formed of ill-joined planks. Here and there were cauldrons hanging above peat fires, and meats broiling on coals; broken bottles and buckets filled with wine. And everywhere was laughter, shouting, and drinking, ragged men, women in tatters, and naked children—an indescribable throng. The men were quarrelling or playing cards, or wallowing in the wine that had been spilled about. The women, who looked like the witches in "Macbeth," were cooking some diabolical mess as they crouched down in the cinders. The children were rolling about and crying. Was this a robber's den or a gipsy's encampment? It was certainly not the colonel's gang that were carousing thus at the very hour when the Regent of France was about to fall into the trap laid for him by La Jonquière. "In whose hands am I?" thought Larfaille, overwhelmed with astonishment.

Just then a man came forward and stood in front of him. This fellow had an almost phantom-like face; a round head surmounting a long body, supported by immensely long legs, a bald cranium which shone like ivory, eyes which sparkled beneath heavy white eyebrows, a sunken mouth, apparently without lips, and a tanned, wrinkled skin, shrivelled up and clinging to the bones. This personage looked like a skeleton escaped from the "Dance of Death," but although he had certainly well-nigh reached the limits of old age, he was still as upright as a gibbet. He wore a frayed doublet and torn small clothes, and dragged an immense sword after him. "Do you know me?" demanded he, in a broken voice, not unlike the grating of a saw. Larfaille, in amazement, examined the fellow with all the attention of which he had command at such a moment, and did not remember ever having seen the frightful-looking creature before. "No?" said the robber. "Well, then, I know you. *Mouche de credo*" (hangman's spy) "that you are!" added he, in robbers' slang.

At these words the detective understood that he had fallen into the hands of one of the gangs that still infested the country parts, and whom he had formerly driven away when they were prowling about near Paris. His evil star had brought him to a den where they had chanced to settle, on again finding themselves in the suburbs. These men, who were only fit to be hung, knew that he was a police-agent. He was lost!

If he had doubted this, the chief would have convinced him of his mistake, for he called out: "You have a short memory, you scamp; have you forgotten Arpalin and Petit Jacques?" Larfaille started. Fatality had brought him into the clutches of the very chieftain of two scoundrels who had been arrested in 1709. He must make up his mind to die. "Come here, you fellows!" said the skeleton-like leader; "set him up on his feet, so that I can tell him what he is to his face." Two robbers came forward—the same, thought Larfaille, who had seized him at the entrance of the vault—and catching hold of him they raised him up. "Take away his knife and pistols," resumed the chief. "He might hurt himself with those playthings, and that would not suit us, for we want his carcase unharmed, don't we, comrades? Now answer me, you rascal! I am the chief and I have a right to question you. What were you doing just now in the quarry?"

"I was waiting for some one who is to come here to-night. I was not looking for you."

"Go and tell that to any one who will believe you. You heard that the

band was near Paris ; you told Argenson, your master ; you told him that you knew our hiding-place, and you offered to capture us. How much was the old dog going to give you ?”

“ Nothing, for I have not seen him ; and I thought that you were still in the forest of Orleans. If I had known that you were here I should not have come alone.”

“ You came with others ; and I'll venture that the whole watch, on foot or on horseback, are waiting for us above in the plains of Vanves. But your master won't have the pleasure of sending us to the Place de Grève this time, and it is you, you scoundrel, who shall swing at the end of a cord.”

“ Do as you please with me,” said Larfaillé ; “ but I swear before Heaven that I was not trying to spy upon you.”

The robber-leader—the *coësre*, as he was called—answered by an outburst of laughter which rang through the vault. “ Listen,” said he, when his mirth was over, “ your business is easy to see through, and you deserve a hempen collar ; but we are just, and we are going to do things properly. We are going to try you ; you will be condemned, and when you are going to the gibbet I shall have a surprise for you.”

Larfaillé's entrance into the vault had not at first aroused the attention of the *fanandels*—as the robbers were then called—to any great extent, for they were all either tipsy or absorbed in gambling. However, when the *coësre*, as they dubbed him in their bandit language, raised his voice to say that the prisoner would be tried, and no doubt executed, they almost all gave up the joys of their orgy, and gathered about the little group in the centre of which was the detective.

There were representatives in this throng of all the different kinds of criminals of the time. There were men who stole by themselves, and who were advanced sentinels, so to speak, in the army of crime ; beggars who were thieves at the same time ; soldiers who had been discharged, and left to infest the King's highway, sometimes robbing the passers-by, sometimes killing men for a couple of pistoles at the orders of some one else. Here and there were shop-clerks who had robbed their employers, and who were easily recognised by their comparatively decent appearance. The women were for the most part old. There were three or four who were still young, and not without some beauty, being robust wenches, with roving eyes and bold gestures, and among them was a tall, red-haired girl, who appeared to be a favourite with the *coësre*, for he had given her his wig to hold, and she held it upon her fist as a castellan's wife was wont, in olden times, to hold her falcon. The detective recognised some of the faces before him, and he knew that he had no pity to expect from men who must remember his having captured their comrades in former days. He gave a last thought to poor Gudule, a last regret to the Duke of Orleans, now left to his fate at the hands of Colonel La Jonquière's band, and awaited his death without blenching. “ Answer me, you hangman's spy !” cried out the *coësre* ; “ do you persist in denying that you came here to spy upon us ?”

“ I say so again,” replied Larfaillé, firmly.

“ Good ! Come here, both of you,” resumed the chief, addressing the two men who had captured the prisoner ; “ say what you have to say, Capucin.”

The scoundrel who bore this monkish name came forward and said : “ I was watching at the entrance of the cavern when the spy came up, and I watched him for ten minutes or so. He was spying, for sure.”

"Yes, I was watching, but not for you," muttered the detective.

"And you, 'Craqueur,' what did you see?" asked the *coësre* of the other robber.

"I saw the spy at his work. When he heard a stone fall, which I threw into the quarry just above his head, he almost laid down flat to listen the better. That is how we caught him."

"You see that these two witnesses agree," said the old man to Larfaille. "What have you to say in self-defence?"

"I repeat that I was not troubling myself about you. I was waiting for some one whom I have been sent here to watch."

"One of us?"

"No."

"Who is it, then?"

The detective reflected for a moment, and then replied: "I will not tell you."

"Ah! my fine fellow," cried the chief, "this is too much. Do you take us for judges that you deride us in that way? Come! be reasonable! tell us clearly what you came to the quarry for; and if you prove to us that you did not come as a spy, why then, on my faith as chief, I will content myself with keeping you here till we move on."

The rascal who spoke thus was in earnest, and Larfaille had but a word to say to save his own life, but that word might expose the Regent to falling into the hands of these wretches who would certainly have looked upon him as a great prize. At all events, they would have fraternised with La Jonquière and his band, among whom, no doubt, they would have found some of their old comrades. Strong as was the temptation, Larfaille had the courage to resist. The humble police agent resolved to die doing his duty. "I have nothing more to say," replied he, quietly; "do with me as you will."

"The case is tried, then," said the chief, imitating the solemn tone of a judge pronouncing sentence. "You are going to be hanged, my man!"

"I know it," replied the prisoner, shrugging his shoulders.

"Bring forward the other culprit," said the skeleton-looking man.

This order startled the detective, though he had resigned himself to sacrificing his life. He forgot for an instant the terrible situation in which he was, and wondered who the other unfortunate being could be whom unlucky fate had brought to the cavern. Meantime, two bandits had left the group to execute the chief's order. "Everybody must be treated according to his merits," said the latter with a mocking air. "I should behave like a rude fellow if I judged this one without due ceremony. Give me my wig, Belle Mirette!"

The red-haired girl, whose name in the bandit's slang meant "Fine eyes," immediately came forward and mounted upon a stool to dress her lord and master's head, in a most respectful manner, with the object which she held in her hand, and which seemingly represented a judge's wig. The satellites almost immediately reappeared with the other culprit, whom each held by one arm.

Larfaille had his hands tied behind him and his face uncovered, but his companion in misfortune had his hands free, whereas his head was covered with a sack which was tied about his neck. The detective looked at him with anxious attention, for he feared that the robbers had laid their hands upon some one of his comrades. The man before him was of vigorous appearance, but slightly bent by age. He was simply but neatly clad in

black, and appeared to be some citizen in easy circumstances ; this, however, did not explain how or why the *fanandels* had seized upon his person. "By what right have you laid hands upon me ?" he demanded, without waiting to be interrogated.

"By the same right which you claim when you lay hands upon one of us," replied the chief, gravely—"the right of strength."

"You are mistaken, I use the right given by the law."

"Listen ! We did not come here to discuss right or wrong, and I will tell you in two words what I wish you to do."

"I have been asking what it is for the last twenty-four hours."

"Don't put yourself out, you'll know fast enough. In the first place, that we did not leave the forest of Orleans without serious reasons."

"You may repeat it, too," muttered the prisoner.

"It was not for our pleasure," resumed the chief, "that we went to watch for you last night in the Rue du Bout du Monde, through which we knew you would pass on your way home after having finished your work at the pillory in the Market Place."

"You laid in wait for me, you killed my servant, and you dragg'd me here by waylaying me, ten against one ; I know all that, and there is no need of telling it over again. I ask you what you want with me."

"Be patient ! I am coming to that. I told you that we had good reasons for carrying you off, and I should not be surprised if you knew what they were."

"I shall not attempt to guess them," replied the prisoner, scornfully.

"I will save you the trouble. You know the punishment which was to be inflicted to-day upon a certain Pierrot le Bossu, with reference to whom orders were sent to you yesterday ?"

"That Pierrot is an abominable rascal, and—"

"He is a great friend of ours, and as we have everything in readiness for enabling him to escape to-night from the Conciergerie, we do not wish to be hindered in our charitable purpose. Do you understand now why we did not leave you in your house in the Faubourg-Poissonnière ?"

"I understand that by murdering my servant you attempted to save one of your number, and I hope that you may fail ; but that does not tell me what you mean to do with me."

"Ha ! ha !" laughed the chief, "you must guess what will happen to you. There is war to the death between us and you, and you do not, I presume, expect to be tenderly treated by us."

"You are going to assassinate me also," replied the prisoner, scornfully. "Do as you please ; but remember that my son will be my successor, and that you will have him to deal with some day or other."

There was a silence. The robber judge could not help starting at this threatening reply, which sounded like a prophecy. He said nothing, but looked darkly and wickedly at his victim. Larfaille listened, mute and motionless, to the strange conversation, and forgot his own misfortune in trying to guess who this prisoner could be whose voice seemed to him almost familiar. "Capucin," called out the chief suddenly, "take off that sack which hides M. Charlot's face." The order was obeyed at once, and the detective, in amazement, saw the very familiar features of Sanson, the public executioner of the city of Paris.

A shudder ran through the crowd of robbers, when they found themselves face to face with the man by whose hand they might some day have perished. It is in vain for men to know that their fate will bring them to

tie scaffold and to profess to be reconciled to it ; they cannot look on the executioner without fear, even when he is a prisoner and well bound. The chief himself seemed to lose some of his arrogance, and looked less boldly at this prisoner. As for Larfaille he could scarcely believe his eyes, and was almost tempted to think that he was dreaming. The duties of his charge often obliged him to look on while the executioner fulfilled his terrible task, and he knew him well, but he could not understand how he had been brought to this den. The executioner had spoken, somewhat obscurely, of a night attack, the murder of a servant, and an abduction, but there was nothing clear in all this confused talk. The only one of the actors, or even spectators of this scene who remained unmoved by it was Charles Sanson, the second of his name, which was then that of the head French executioner. This representative of a famous race which has been perpetuated to our times, took, like his ancestors and descendants, a pride in the hereditary functions of his family. And at that time the executioner might be said to have a certain place in the social scale. The judges applied the law ; he executed it, and was as stern as the law itself, careful of his dignity, proud of his privileges, and striking without pity or remorse in presence of a populace who feared but did not hate him. Charles Sanson, who had held his position since 1703, had a strong arm and a high heart, although he was over fifty years of age. His answers and his bearing had proved to the bandits that he was not afraid ; he inspired them, on the contrary, with almost superstitious terror, and this he saw very clearly.

The adventure which had placed him in their power was a strange one. The evening before, on returning at ten o'clock from the pillory at the Halles, where he had placed three assessors convicted of prevarication, as he was going homewards, he had been assailed by three men. His servant, on attempting to resist, had been shot, and he had been bound and gagged, a sack put over his head, and after being laid across the back of a horse, he had been brought to the Gloriettes quarry. Then he had been thrust into a subterranean cell, and he had just been removed from it after having been kept there for twenty-four hours. He was now beginning to understand why the robbers had carried him off. One of their number, a highway robber whose exploits had made him famous under the name of Pierrot le Bossu, was to be broken on the wheel on the following day, and the bandits, in order to gain time for him to escape, had taken it into their heads to delay the execution by keeping the executioner out of the way. This discovery reassured Sanson the more, as he knew that rascals of this sort plumed themselves sometimes on doing generous deeds.

There exists a kind of occult tie between the executioner and those who, sooner or later, must pass through his hands. Bandits look upon him as soldiers do upon the cannon of the enemy which will, perhaps, be their doom. Soldiers try to protect themselves from the gun ; they do not despise it. Rogues even prefer the executioner to a spy or a traitor. Besides, they know that they may soon need his compassion. It depends upon him to lessen their torture or shorten their punishment upon the wheel by a quick blow that proves fatal at once.

This gave Sanson an idea. "If it be true," said he, looking fixedly at the chief, "that you have only detained me to give Pierrot le Bossu time to escape, he must be out of his difficulties by now, and there is nothing to prevent you from setting me at liberty."

"Oho!" exclaimed the robber chief, "you talk too fast, Charlot, my friend! Before setting you free to go where you like our men must bring Pierrot back, and I have not seen anything of them as yet. We have not come to that, besides, and I have something else to say to you."

"What is it?" said Charles Sanson, in a disdainful tone.

"Listen, Charlot. You are at our mercy, and I need but make a sign to send you, who have *shortened* so many of us, to 'marry the widow' in your turn. You are the executioner—it is true, and your business is to break us upon the whel and hang us; but another will come after you, and, besides, a brave fellow would rather deal with you than take a tiresome journey to the King's galleyes. I shall not make any difficulty about letting you go—when we get back Pierrot le Bossu, of course—but on one condition."

"What is that?"

"You see that man?" said the chief, pointing at Larfaillé.

For the first time since he had got rid of the sack which had enveloped his head Sanson looked at the man who had been brought with him before this odious tribunal of robbers. The detective had often been on duty at the Grève with him, and, as we have seen, he knew the executioner's face perfectly well, but Sanson had never seen Larfaillé except as part of an escort. He glanced at his companion in misfortune, but did not recognise him. Larfaillé had attired himself expressly for his night errand, and Sanson took him for some unlucky traveller who had been stopped on the highway. "This man," resumed the chief, raising his voice so as to be heard by all the robbers under his command, "is one of Argenson's paid spies, and we found him prowling about this place. He deserves death. We have just tried him and sentenced him, and he would have been executed at once, but I did not wish that any of us should soil their hands by touching a police spy."

A hoarse murmur rose from the gang. The robbers imagined that the chief was about to pardon the spy. "Besides," resumed the frightful old man, with a dry laugh, "to *shorten* this man ourselves would be infringing upon your rights and privileges. He shall be placed in your hands, Charlot, and you cannot refuse to give us a specimen of your skill."

He had scarcely finished when cries of approbation and joy arose everywhere. "Yes, yes, let the police spy, the gallowsman's hireling, go to the executioner!" "Charlot will teach him to dance!" "Long live the chief!"

The latter made a sign, and the uproar ceased. "You see, Charlot, it's all settled," resumed he. "You will just hang this fellow up. We have some good hempen cord here, and he can gambol about from the beam that you see up there. He deserves breaking on the wheel, but we have nothing of the kind here, unfortunately, and must take such gallows as we have. When you have done your work, and when Pierrot is restored to us, two of our men will place the sack over your head, and take you back, safe and sound, to the place where we captured you. You can sleep in your bed, Charlot, and to-morrow you will be free to tell your little adventure to the head of the police, for we shall change our quarters to-night, and to-morrow we shall be off and away."

Larfaillé had not lost a word of this precious speech, and he firmly believed that his last hour had come. Why should Sanson, who executed a man every day, refuse to hang him to save his own life? "Come, Charlot; to work!" cried out the chief. "Take hold of the fellow, and

hang him at once ! ” The executioner did not stir, however. “ What are you waiting for ? ” demanded the robber-chief.

“ For you to show me an order to execute this man ; a regular order, ” replied Sanson, quietly. “ You say that he has been tried. By whom ? Was it at the Châtelet, by the Tournelle Court, or by the head of the police ? Where is the report of the proceedings ? Where is the sentence in regular form ? Where is the clerk to give me the proper order ? ”

“ Here is the order for execution, ” said a robber who was inclined to jest, coming forward with a pistol in his hand. However, the chief pushed the fellow away, and said to Sanson : “ You see, Charlot, that it would be vain to attempt to resist us. We wish to have the pleasure of seeing you hang somebody, and we cannot give it up. If you persist in depriving us of that satisfaction, we shall console ourselves by despatching you, and it would be quite as entertaining, for no one ever yet saw such as us tie an executioner to the gibbet. Choose, and choose quickly ; night is passing, and we must be off before day. ”

“ I prefer death, ” said Sanson, boldly. “ I kill when the law requires me to kill, but I don’t assassinate. It is you who assassinate, and I break you upon the wheel when you are captured. ”

“ Reflect once more, Charlot. I give you five minutes to make up your mind. ”

“ I have made up my mind. I refuse. ”

“ He refuses ! ” cried the chief. “ You are witnesses, comrades, that I have treated Charlot fairly, and as brave fellows should who do not wish to take advantage of a vanquished enemy. ”

“ Yes ! yes ! ” howled the robbers.

“ Well then, my children, the executioner shall be treated as he wishes. We counted upon one hanging ; we shall have two. We are obliged to do it ourselves, but we shall be the gainers by it. Come, who will do what M. Sanson does ? ”

“ I ! ” replied several of the robbers, all at once. The chief looked round upon his men, in order to choose two or three hangmen, when the merrily-disposed bandit who had threatened Sanson with his pistol came forward, and said : “ Daron ” (master), “ the cord isn’t enough. We ought to burn the executioner, and draw and quarter the spy. We hold them both, and we shall never have such a chance again. Let us make the most of it, and amuse ourselves a little. ”

“ Oho ! Poulailler, my friend, you are by no means merciful, ” said the old rascal ; “ but you forget that we have no means of setting to work as M. de Paris does at the Grève. Where is the stake at which we could roast M. Sanson ? Where are the horses to draw and quarter that scamp in the black coat ? ”

“ Bah ! the kitchen fires will do to toast the executioner, and as for the hangman’s spy, we can fasten him ourselves by his hands and feet, and we must be strong enough to pull him to pieces. ”

At this frightful proposition Sanson did not blanch, but Larfaillé felt cold sweat break out upon him. He was resigned to death, but he had not expected to be tortured. As for the chief, he seemed to hesitate, although used to atrocities. “ What do you say to this, comrades ? ” he asked.

There were some exclamations of approval, but there were also murmurs of disapprobation. The majority were silent. “ I have another idea, ” said the tall, red-haired girl, who just before had been taking care of the chieftain’s wig.

“What may that be, Belle-Mirette?” asked the chief.

“I think,” began the damsels, “that we ought to benefit by this lucky chance. I should enjoy seeing the burning, and the drawing, and the quartering as much as Poulailleur would, but our interests come first. When the spy is pulled to pieces and the executioner toasted, what then? We might share their fragments all round, but what good would they do us? Whereas by keeping one of them as a hostage he may be useful to us.”

“Ha! ha! my girl! that’s not a bad idea. But what should we do with him?”

“We could put a chain round his neck, and another round his waist, and take him with us to the forest of Orleans. There, he would be our dog and slave. We can beat him and spit in his face from morning till night, and night till morning; the pleasure will last longer, and if, some day, one of our men is taken, we can let the judges know that we have got one of their spies, and propose to give him up on condition that they give us back our brother.”

The chief looked round at the band, and saw almost unanimous assent in their faces. Every one of the men there said to himself that it might be his fate to fall into the hands of the law, and that then he would be glad to benefit by the exchange. “Come here, Belle-Mirette, let me kiss you for your good advice,” said the old villain, drawing his red-haired counsellor to his heart. “It is settled, then, my children, we will chain up the rascal and drag him along with us?”

“Yes, and we will beat him with a whip as he goes along.”

“Besides, we shall always be able to draw and quarter him, if we choose,” said Poulailleur, who clung to his own proposal. “It will be much easier in the forest.”

“Good!” said the chief, “but the executioner? What shall we do with him? Can’t you advise us again, my girl?”

Belle-Mirette, at this flattering proposal, made no difficulty in giving her opinion. “That man, *daron*, must be *shortened*,” replied she, shaking her fist at Sanson. With her hair in disorder and falling about her like a lion’s mane, her eyes blazing with ferocious light, and her arm extended, she looked like a Roman matron turning down her thumb as a sign that she demanded the death of a gladiator fallen in the arena. “Yes, he must be *shortened*, and right away,” resumed the fury, grating her teeth. “He hanged my mother, and broke my husband upon the wheel last year. If you let him go, I’ll tear out his eyes with my nails before he can get off, and I——”

“There! there!” interrupted the chief, “be quiet, my beauty! You shall have all you ask, I promise you.”

The beauty was already calmer, for she quietly resumed: “He must be killed, but not here. Argenson’s police know our hiding-place, for they sent their spy to watch the entrance. The marshalsea may come to-morrow to make a raid upon the vault. If they find the executioner’s body here, they will start off after us, and——”

“We need only burn him, and there would be nothing left of him,” said Poulailleur, vexed at being deprived of the pleasure of seeing suffering.

“No; that would take too long. We have no time to lose in returning to the forest.”

“Then, my girl, you must think of something else.”

“I propose to turn Charlot over to two strong *fanandels*. They can take him outside and make him go up the road by kicking him, and drag

him to the steepest place and then throw him over into the quarry. That will kill him. Our men can leave him there, after making sure that he is really dead, and as they must take care to untie him before they go away, and bring the cords back with them, those who find him will think that he went for a walk about Vanves or Châtillon, and that on his way back at night he fell over by accident."

There was a universal cry of admiration in honour of Belle-Mirette, and she came near being borne aloft in triumph. The chief himself seemed to share the enthusiasm of his subjects, but he thought that he was bound to make one final effort to induce them to revert to the first programme, and at the same time to persuade Sanson to save his own life at the expense of the detective's. The chief did not, in reality, share the hatred which the red-haired girl felt for the executioner, and was much more interested in him than in the "hangman's spy," as he called Larfaillé. "*Fanandels*," said he, raising his voice, "I am of the general opinion, but your *daron* has but one word. I offered just now to pardon Charlot if he would hang this scoundrel before our eyes. Honour obliges me to offer this once more. If he refuses he shall die. It will be his own fault, and I wash my hands of the matter."

A smile of contempt contracted Sanson's lips as he heard the robber talk of his honour. Larfaillé raised his eyes anxiously, for he greatly preferred captivity, which held out a hope at least of seeing Gudule again, if he could but escape being hanged at once. The gang did not utter a word. "Charlot," exclaimed the chief, in a thundering voice, "will you do what we require?"

"No," said the executioner, firmly.

"Take care! If you do not accept this time, I shall not propose it again."

"And I shall not take the trouble to reply. Kill me, but do not insult me. It is insulting me to ask me to obey the orders of wretches like yourselves."

"Then I say no more," replied the fierce old man, turning his back upon Sanson. Then he resumed his seat at the top of an empty barrel, where he had been perched before he began to question the prisoners. Scarcely had he placed himself upon this singular throne, at the foot of which Belle-Mirette installed herself, than he gave orders to end the matter. "Craqueur and Capucin," called he to two robbers in the group, "gag the executioner to prevent him from calling for help when he is in the open air; take one of his arms each of you, and drag him outside, and when you have taken him to the top, send him head-foremost over the quarry to find out whether the stones of the Gloriettes are soft or not." The two scoundrels whom he designated were those who had captured Larfaillé. They at once set to work, and while they were busy the chief added, pointing to the unfortunate detective: "You, Poulailler, can take that fellow by the collar and drag him to the corner where the women keep their cauldrons. He can rest there while we make ready to start, and we must do so at once, for I warn you, comrades, that if in two hours our comrades don't bring Pierrot le Bossu back, we shall start without him. So you must begin making ready at once."

These commands were duly executed. The men and women began their preparations for departure, while a strap was being tied over Sanson's mouth, and Poulailler brutally pushed Larfaillé towards his temporary prison. The police agent could have clasped the knees of the courageous

executioner, who had saved his life, if he had been permitted to do so. But he had not even time to give him a look of gratitude and bid him farewell. "Come, you must make haste, all of you," howled the chief, "and you must be ready in ten minutes. Charlott, give my compliments to the *fanandels* whom you will presently find in the place where you sent them."

Was Charles Sanson, the executioner of Paris, a hero? It would be bold to affirm this. It is even probable that the courage of which he gave evidence at this terrible moment came entirely from a quality which was very common then, but is very rare now—the feeling of professional honour. The executioner considered himself bound by his office, and considered he would derogate by killing illegally. He allowed himself to be gagged and bound without making the slightest resistance. Capucin and Craqueur then seized him and pushed him outside. The executioner was a man, and had a heart and a family. Thirteen years before he had married for love a woman whom he still idolised, one named Marie Dubut, who had borne him two sons, both brought up from their birth to their father's frightful calling. Charles Jean Baptiste, the elder, who was destined to be his direct successor, had a son named Charles Henri, who was the executioner during the "Reign of Terror," and decapitated a king, a queen, and a princess of France, besides well-nigh countless members of the nobility. Charles Sanson, the happy husband and father, was a rich man. An executioner's pay was then very large; indeed, his income was not less than sixty thousand livres. This money enabled him to enjoy all the material pleasures of life. He owned an almost lordly house at the corner of the Rue de la Poissonnière, with a superb court-yard, and an immense garden, which now would be called a park. As he now walked to his fate he reflected that he had done his duty, that Heaven was just, that the wretches who were about to assassinate him would come to the scaffold for some other crime, and be hanged or broken on the wheel by his successor, who would thus, without knowing it, avenge his father's murder. When this executioner—now become the victim—left the vault, the night was less dense than it had been while the unlucky Larfallie was on the watch. Thus Craqueur and Capucin, like prudent men, stopped for a moment behind the block of sandstone to look about them and listen before venturing through the Gloriettes quarry. Sanson, who was gagged and had his arms pinioned, could, however, use his eyes and ears undisturbed. He, also, looked about him and listened. He soon thought that he saw two shadows moving about at the end of the road, and fancied that he heard stones grating beneath the feet of some one who was walking about cautiously. A ray of hope then came to him. The two robbers also, however, unfortunately perceived that the road was not free. "One would think that there was some one over there," whispered Capucin to his companion.

"It seems so," repeated Craqueur.

"What shall we do?"

"Wait till we see what those people are going to do, prowling about here at this time of night."

"What if we should go back meantime?"

"Why? They will not discover us behind this big stone, and we speak so low that they will not suspect that any one is here."

"Humph! I am not sure of that. This is a pretty task that the chief has given us."

"I don't dislike it, for my part. I have always longed to see an executioner put to death."

"So have I, but it would have been better to make him 'marry the widow' than to do this. We should not have had to disturb ourselves, but out here in the open air——"

"In the open air there is no one to disturb us. I don't see any one moving now. We must have been mistaken just now."

This was true. Nothing was to be seen or heard. The hope which had come to Sanson for an instant had departed. "Never mind," said Capucin, "I do not care to climb up there. The spy whom we caught was perhaps not alone, and I'll venture that there are more of them in the plain of Vanves. If we fell into the wasp's nest it would be a nasty job."

"There is a way to save ourselves the journey," muttered Craqueur.

"What way is that?"

"Have you your knife?"

"What a question! Of course I have."

"Well then, prick the executioner in the throat in the right place, where the neck joins the shoulder. He won't stir; I will hold him. If you strike strongly, and have a good eye, he will fall dead at once."

"Well, and what then?"

"We will drag him a little further and leave him there."

"Yes, for the chief to find out that we did not do as he ordered. We should have to ride the wooden horse for two hours with a twenty-pound weight tied to each foot, if he found it out."

"Never mind; we shall be off before daybreak. The chief will see the body, and he will, perhaps, give it a kick as he goes by, but he won't take time to examine it. Come, is it agreed, Capucin?"

Sanson did not lose a word of this dialogue, which was carried on in a low tone, but quite close to his ear, and he thought that his last hour had come. He raised his thoughts to heaven and closed his eyes, so as not to see the stroke. Capucin, however, instead of stabbing him, made an objection. "I have another idea," said he; "Charlot is rich, and he would give a great deal to buy his life of us. What if we should sell it to him?"

The executioner started. Hope was returning to him, for his dignity would lose nothing by his paying a ransom. He could not speak, but he made a motion with his head to signify that he was ready to make a bargain. "You see Charlot is quite willing," resumed Capucin.

"Oh, yes," said Craqueur, "I'm sure that he would be only too glad; but you must be a great fool to make such a proposition to him."

"Not such a fool, either. A thousand pistoles apiece would be very pleasant in our pockets."

"And how could the money get into our pockets, will you tell me that? Who would go to Charlot's house after it? I think that we should find more police-agents than money there, and that such an errand as that would lead us straight to the Place de Grève."

"Charlot, perhaps, has the money about him."

"You must be losing your head, Capucin. Ask him."

Sanson saved them the trouble of questioning him by shaking his head. "There! Are you satisfied now?" said Craqueur.

"Charlot is an honest man, and one may rely upon his word," resumed Capucin, who was decidedly inclined to mild measures.

"Tell that to whom you like! I am as fond of money as anybody, but I don't give credit. And besides, I do not wish to quarrel with the chief."

He has a hasty temper, and it will cost us dear if we disobey him. We have lost fully a quarter of an hour with all this talk instead of action. Let us make an end of the job."

"How?"

"As the chief told us, as you don't wish to bleed the executioner; but let's make haste. If there were any one in the quarry he would have moved while we were chattering away here. The road is free. Let us go on."

This time Capucin made no further objection. He caught hold of Sanson's left arm, while the other bandit seized his right, and between them they dragged him along. The executioner suffered them to do so without resisting. He knew that in this quarry it would be useless, but he thought that in the plain an attempt at resistance might have some slight chance of success. Not that he hoped, garrotted as he was, to defend himself from the two robbers, or even to avoid their knives, but the stir made by a struggle with them might be heard and attract some one. Sanson had not forgotten the detective, and, like the bandits, he thought it unlikely that he had come to the robbers' retreat alone. If his comrades were concealed in the environs of the quarry the executioner might obtain help, provided he could succeed in making noise enough to attract their attention. He therefore saved his strength in order to be able to use it at the proper moment. Capucin and Craqueur, who were in a hurry to have done with him, dragged him along very fast, and made him cross the quarry at a brisk pace. They had just reached the end of the path, and were beginning to ascend, when two men suddenly rose before them. "Who goes there?" said one of these two men.

The bandits who held Sanson possessed the agility as well as the ferocity of tigers. In the flash of an eye they let go their prisoner, and, without advising with one another, knocked him down by giving him a kick and a blow, drew their knives, and threw themselves upon the enemy. But the enemy was ready for them. Craqueur, who had come forward the first, met with the point of a long sword, and his onset was so sudden that he ran himself through the body. The sword went in below the right breast and came out between the shoulders. At the same moment Capucin received such a blow upon the head from behind that it broke his skull. Both bandits fell like stones, and without uttering a single cry.

"Are they dead?" said the same stranger who had asked: "Who goes there?"

There was a short silence. The man who had been spoken to immediately knelt down and examined the bodies which lay upon the ground. "Quite dead, count," said he, after having turned them over.

"Good! But who are they?"

"The devil only knows, count; their intentions seem to have been bad, for each of them has a long, sharp knife."

"This is strange! I hope that we have not made a mistake and killed any of the colonel's men; for he must have arrived long ago, and I—"

"There is another man here, count," exclaimed the kneeling man.

"A third? Who is he?"

"There is a third body here, but this man is alive. I can feel his heart beating, and he must be very much frightened, for it beats very fast."

"What does this mean? I only saw two men standing up. Is this one wounded?"

"I don't know, count, but he is certainly bound."

“ Bound ? ”

“ Yes, his arms are pinioned with a strong cord. Hold !—he is gagged besides.”

“ Oho ! can it be one of our men whom the rascals had captured ? or rather—who knows ? If—but no, it is impossible ; they would not have dared to gag the Duke of Orleans. Liévin, look at his face.”

“ Count, it is too dark, darker than in the forest of Baussignies, and I cannot distinguish his features.”

“ Untie the cords then, help him to rise, and I will question him.”

Liévin immediately obeyed, and unfastened the strap across Sanson’s mouth. “ There ! ” the man called Liévin said, when all was over ; “ nothing disturbs him now, and we shall find out what has happened. Come, fellow, speak up, and tell the count what brought you here.”

A deep sigh was the first reply of the prisoner, who was half suffocated and still stunned by his fall. “ Will you speak, you rascal ! ” called out the master, while the servant shook the prisoner rudely.

“ Speak lower, sir, in the name of heaven ! ” said Sanson, with a great effort.

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ We are two paces away from a den of robbers, sir. The entrance is just below, behind this rock, twenty yards at most from this spot, and if they hear you, and the least noise might betray your presence, they—”

“ Robbers ! ” muttered the count ; “ fear must have upset this man’s mind—unless, indeed, he has taken the colonel’s soldiers for a troop of robbers.”

“ A cavern here is the refuge of an entire band, and there would be no possibility of resistance if they surprised us.”

“ Very well, my friend ; but what were you doing there ? ” demanded Liévin.

“ I had the misfortune to fall into their hands ; they condemned me to death, and the two men you have killed were about to execute me.”

“ Is that the reason why they tied you up like a sheep for the slaughter ? ”

“ Yes, they are the worst bandits in the Ile de France. They give no quarter, and often inflict frightful tortures upon their prisoners.”

“ The deuce they do ! Then, if they found that we had killed two of their number—”

“ They would kill you without mercy. You must fly, I tell you, and at once, without losing a moment—a second.”

Liévin rose quickly and said to his master : “ I believe, count, that this man is telling the truth, and that we should do well to quit this place, which is dangerous, it seems.”

“ I cannot do so. The colonel has my promise,” said M. de Horn, impatiently—for it was he who was there with his servant, and he had come there in accordance with La Jonquiére’s orders.

“ Count,” insisted the faithful Liévin, “ we are running great risks in remaining here, and I fear that you are exposing yourself for nothing, for I dare swear that the colonel will not come.”

“ Why not ? ”

“ Because the hour of meeting has passed long ago. It was at midnight, if I am not mistaken, that—”

“ La Jonquiére may be delayed. I don’t wish to be accused of deserting my post.”

“ Is it not more natural, count, to suppose that some mishap has

interfered with the colonel's plans, and that the matter has been put off?"

"No matter! I am resolved to wait here till dawn."

"Well, sir," said Sanson, who did not understand what was being said, but listened anxiously to it, as was only natural, "I swear to you, by my life in this world and my salvation in the next, that if you delay five minutes it will be too late. The leader of the robber band, not seeing the men return whom he just now sent out to kill me, will send others to look for them. If they meet us here we are lost."

"Why? We can defend ourselves," replied the count. "I have my sword."

"I have just seen, count, that you know how to use it ably; but let us begone, I beg of you. To expose one's self thus is not courage, but madness. They will be ten or twenty against you at a time, and I repeat it—we are at the entrance of a hornet's nest. The rascals may rush out upon us at any moment."

"He is right," urged M. de Horn's servant in a whisper.

"Yes, sir," said Sanson, "I swear to you that I do not fear death, but I implore you, do not take away my chance of some day being able to prove my gratitude to you."

The executioner said this with so much earnestness and such evident sincerity, that the young count, convinced and touched at last, consented to follow his excellent advice. "So be it!" said he, abruptly. "Let us go." And he muttered: "I must see the colonel at once, and make him explain why he made me come here for nothing. If he has been making game of me, I will show him that he cannot do so with impunity."

"That is well said, count," whispered Liévin, "but let us make haste hence."

"I cannot walk, sir, bound as I am," observed Sanson.

"Wait a moment, master," replied the active serving-man, taking up one of the robbers' kuives.

The cords with which the executioner was pinioned were soon cut through. "Keep this weapon, for we may meet some enemy; and now let us go," said Liévin, holding out the knife to Sanson, who eagerly took it. "You can be very useful to us, master, if you know the shortest way back to Paris."

"I do. It is the road to Châtillon, and must be here on our left; for although those rascals brought me here with my head in a sack, I heard enough to know that we are at the bottom of the Gloriettes quarry, at the end of the plain of Vanves. Come, gentlemen."

Sanson now began to climb up, followed closely by Liévin, and at a short distance by Horn, who grumbled at going away. "It is my fate always to miss Philip," grumbled he, casting a last look at the quarry where he had hoped to cross steels with the Regent in single combat.

They reached the road to Châtillon without being disturbed in their flight. The night was darker than ever, and rain had fallen. The wind blew a gale. They perhaps owed it to the bad weather that the men posted about did not observe them. These, faithful to their orders, still held themselves in ambush, waiting for Larfaillé's promised signal, and thus let the fugitives retire without disturbing them. After an hour's hurried walking, the count and his servant re-entered Paris in company with the man whom they had saved. They had not exchanged a single word on the way. Young Horn, furious at having missed his duel, only

thought of the explanation which he meant to demand of La Jonquière. Liévin was blessing from the depths of his heart the chance which had frustrated the dangerous game in which his master was engaged, and silently congratulated himself on finding that he had reached the city again safe and sound. Sanson was fervently thanking Heaven for having so evidently protected him under these terrible trials; but he did not forget that he owed his life to two unknown men, and as soon as he thought himself out of the reach of the robbers he yielded to the very natural desire to learn the names of those who had rescued him. But, on the other hand, he did not wish that they should know who he was. Count de Horn, on re-entering Paris, had other thoughts. The man whom he had saved was an object of indifference to him, and he cared nothing for the robbers who had been sent into another world. What mattered the life or death of all these men to him, as he thought only of his love and his revenge? His revenge had again escaped him, and his love remained where it had been since he had received the encouraging letter from the Marchioness de Parabère. He was now very angry, and thought of breaking off all relations with La Jonquière, who had made him set out upon a useless errand. Pending an interview with the colonel, he wished to separate himself from the companion he had met with at the Gloriettes quarry. It was prudent not to trust too much in a stranger. Horn fore-saw questions which he had resolved not to answer. It would be better, if possible, to avoid them. "Master," said he to Sanson, at the moment when the latter was warmly expressing his gratitude, "I have taken you out of danger, and you have warned me that I, myself, was also in danger. We are quits, and there is nothing now to prevent each of us from going his own road."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed the executioner, "I do not look upon matters thus, and I rely upon remaining with you until I know to whom I am indebted for being able to behold my wife and children once again."

"That is idle, my good man. Your wife and children must be impatiently expecting you: you must not make them wait. Farewell!"

These words were exchanged at the corner of a deserted cross-road, under a street light which the wind and rain had not yet extinguished. The count immediately went on a few steps, to go away, but Sanson resolutely barred the road. "What does this mean?" demanded M. de Horn, putting his hand to his sword-hilt.

"It means, sir," replied Sanson, "that I had rather that you killed me than refused to tell me your name, for you are my saviour."

"Well, then, by heaven! I declare to you that I have no more intention of telling you my name than I have of killing you."

"Come, sir," said Liévin, gently, "my master is naturally very determined, and you would do well not to try to persuade him. Besides, between ourselves, what does this furious desire to know him really mean? Why, you must see that you belong to a different class, and that you are not likely ever to meet him again!"

"But that is the reason why I entreat him to tell me his name, that I may bless it. Without him I should now be lying shattered at the bottom of that horrible quarry."

"Bah! honest people do such little services as these to one another, and they are not worth talking of," said the Walloon lackey, with comicl indifference.

"That may be, between noblemen, but please consider that I am only

a citizen of Paris, and that I would willingly give all I own if I could write upon my heart the——”

“Well, then, put my face upon your heart, as I cannot hide it, but let me go,” said the count, who was stamping with impatience.

“I shall never forget your features, you may be sure, but in the name of the heaven above us all, do not refuse me one more satisfaction. Hold, sir ! you said just now that I did you a service in warning you of the risk which you ran in that cut-throat hole. Well, then, reward me by telling me your name.”

Horn would not allow himself to be touched by these entreaties. The man’s insistence began to seem suspicious to him, and he asked himself whether it would not be better to reply to his questions by other questions, in order to find out who he was. It might be that he was a spy of Dubois or Argenson’s, and, in that case, his identity was an important point. “Come now, master,” said the count, looking closely at his companion, “it seems to me that you are very ready to question others, but little disposed to tell them anything about yourself. Supposing that I were willing to satisfy you, it would not, at all events, be until I learned from you how you came to be among those rascals.”

“Alas ! sir,” replied Sanson, “you reproach me with unceasingly questioning you, and yet Heaven is my witness that I have never even in thought questioned the motives that led you to the spot where I had the luck to meet you. As for me, I am quite ready to tell you the unfortunate adventure into which fate led me. I thought that I had said a few words regarding it when you killed those two assassins.”

“You told me that the robbers had sentenced you to death, and were about to execute you, but you did not tell me what you were doing among them. You will even confess that meeting a man in such company, a man who says he is a citizen of Paris, is strange, at least, and would excite anybody’s curiosity.”

“That is quite true, sir, and I will tell you all. Yesterday, on returning home at a late hour of the night, I was assailed in the Rue du Bout du Monde by a troop of armed men. My servant who accompanied me was shot in the head with a pistol. I was seized, bound, and gagged, and then taken to the cavern where these robbers hide.”

“What ! they took the trouble to impose such a long journey on you instead of robbing you upon the spot? They are very strange fellows.”

“They did not want my money, but myself.”

“In that case, why did they not deal with you at once, as with your servant?”

“They had a motive for not despatching me at once,” said Sanson, with embarrassment. He was beginning to see that his confidential communications might lead him further than he wished to go.

“Very well,” said M. de Horn, coldly ; “but why did they keep you a whole day in their den?”

“For the same reason,” stammered the executioner, more and more embarrassed.

“I think that I can guess what it was,” resumed the count, in a threatening tone. “Then, according to you, the bandits proceeded to try you, convict you, and give orders for your execution, and they took you to their den to do all this at their ease?”

“Yes, sir. And this you can well believe, since you miraculously interfered at the moment when they were leading me to death.”

"I believe that you deserved to die," said M. de Horn, gravely. "Indeed, you have told me enough to show me what you are. These good fellows were right when they seized you, and I can very well understand why they dragged you to their cave, and did you the honour to try you and formally order your execution. It is because they wished to treat you like a spy, do you hear, you rascal?"

Sanson started, but did not utter a word. The light of the street-lantern would, if it had been brighter, have shown two tears which were rolling down the old executioner's cheeks. "I am of the opinion of these gentlemen of the highway, and I think that a spy deserves death," added the count, in a hoarse voice.

Something flashed under the street-lantern. It was M. de Horn's sword, that weapon which had saved Sanson in the Gloriettes quarry. Now, it was set against the executioner's breast. This was too much, and in order that he might not die by his preserver's hand, Sanson made up his mind to speak. "You may kill me if you choose, sir," said he, quickly. "My life is yours, since I owe it to you. But I have a right to deny that I deserve the insult which you have put upon me. I am not a spy, sir, I am the public executioner."

"The public executioner!" exclaimed Horn, stepping back.

"Yes, sir, I am Charles Sanson, the executioner of the city of Paris. Do you understand now why the robbers wished to kill me?"

The count did not reply. He was startled, and examined with mingled curiosity and repugnance the strange man whom chance had thrown in his way an hour before. As for Liévin, he showed unequivocal signs of alarm, and came near running away. "If you refuse to believe me," said Sanson, sadly, "I will ask you to follow me to my home. But a nobleman would scorn to cross the threshold of the executioner's house, and I can see, sir, that you are a nobleman. Let us part, then, and pardon me for not having told you my name before. And now, sir, it is unlikely that we shall ever meet again in this world; but let me say to you that if you ever need Charles Sanson he will do for you whatever you may ask, at any time." The executioner strode away as he ceased speaking, and Count de Horn made no attempt to detain him.

VIII.

EARLY on the morrow of that eventful night M. de Horn hastened to the lodgings of the Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré. He had risen early, although he had slept but ill, and was in a very bad humour. Informed the night before by Lorenzo de Mille that the decisive step would be taken at midnight, and ordered to repair alone with his confidential servant to the Gloriettes quarry, the young nobleman had felt delighted at the news, and had set out upon the hazardous adventure. His conduct was the more meritorious in so doing, as he was greatly taken up with Madame de Parabère, who had written him a letter which filled him with hope. Others, in his place, would have let the colonel and the conspiracy go, without caring for aught except finding the little retreat at Asnières where the "bat" of the Opera ball had promised to come and see him. But Antoine-Joseph de Horn had been born with the quarrelsome instincts of his family, and he longed to cross swords with the Regent as much as to carry off the latter's lady-love. He had set out at nightfall, and gone

across the country at the risk of falling into the hands of the watch, of being assailed by robbers, or of breaking his neck in the quarry. He had had the good luck to meet with a peasant who had shown him the way to the place, and had reached it unharmed. Then came a long spell of waiting, and finally the encounter with the executioner of the city of Paris. In all this he found cause for anger, which turned against La Jonquière and his associates. He would have liked to demand satisfaction from the colonel in person, but he did not know where to find him. There was the tavern of the Epée de Bois, where, by presenting himself at certain hours, and making himself known to the innkeeper, Horn was almost sure of being introduced into the conspirators' private room. But he had such a dislike to Master Blanche-Barbe that he had sworn never again to return to his establishment. On the other hand, some catastrophe might have happened to the band; Argenson's police might have found out the mysteries of the Allée de Venise. So the count thought it best to turn to M. du Terne, who had not concealed from him where he lived under the name of Lestang.

Night brings good counsel, so it is said, and disappointment teaches a good lesson; young Horn began to reflect that he had come to France to amuse himself, and not to mingle in political difficulties with which he had nothing to do. He had that morning received a long letter from his mother, Princess Antoinette, who had recommended him to be prudent, and reproved him, as mothers are wont to do, for being extravagant, finally begging that he would speedily return to Flanders. He was not inclined to do so, since he had fallen in love with Madame de Parabère, but he admitted that he had been foolish in joining La Jonquière. He easily found the abode of Master La Perrelle, whose name was displayed upon a sign, and inquired from a shop-boy, who told him that Lestang lived on the fourth floor. Thereupon he ran lightly up the stairs, and knocked at a door of mean appearance, just under the roof. This door opened at once, and Horn found himself before the chevalier, who made a gesture of surprise, raised his finger to his lip, and led him into the room. "Ah, count," said he, "how happy I am to see you again!" Then the chevalier added, in a low tone: "You gave us great anxiety."

"Indeed!" said Horn.

"Yes, events of grave importance have occurred, and at this moment I mistrust everybody. But let us go into the next room, and you will find some one who will be as glad to see you as I am. Besides, we can speak freely."

The count followed Terne, who led him into a room where he found La Jonquière seated beside the fireplace. The colonel wore the uniform of a French guardsman—that which he had donned the night before—and appeared more anxious than usual. His face had a care-worn expression, but he brightened up when Horn appeared. "What! is it you, my dear count?" exclaimed the partisan, rising at once and going towards him with open arms.

The young nobleman drew back to avoid this warm reception, and looked at La Jonquière from head to foot, saying: "Before we go further, sir, pray explain to me why you made game of me last night."

"Good!" exclaimed the colonel, laughing in a somewhat unnatural manner, "you are alluding to a certain useless journey?"

"Yes, and I have not come here to be hugged, but to have an explanation and an apology."

At this last word La Jonquière turned somewhat pale, and bit his lip. The old reiter was little accustomed to be spoken to in this manner, and patience was not his prominent virtue. "You crow very loudly for a young cock," he replied, drily, "and I warn you that Colonel La Jonquière has never yet apologised to any one. Still I am willing to explain matters to you, if you ask me to do so, as one gentleman asks another."

"Are you a gentleman?"

The colonel was about to throw himself upon his insulter, but restrained himself. "Very well, count," said he, coolly, "I see that you have come here to get a lesson which you greatly need. I will give it to you at once. We can talk afterwards." With this he drew his sword. "Colonel, stop, I beg of you!" exclaimed the chevalier.

"Let me alone, Terne! We must talk seriously with the count, and he won't be in a condition to reason till his anger is over. I will try to calm it. Be good enough to push this table aside; it is in our way, and leave us together, at once."

Terne had only to look at Horn to see that any attempt at reconciliation would be vain. The young count was livid with rage, and had already drawn his sword. The chevalier therefore drew the table aside, made room for the antagonists, and then went and stood with his back to the door. The colonel winked significantly at him, and put himself on guard in a truly scientific manner. Horn attacked him furiously. He handled his sword well, and was young and agile. For a time there was a display of close action, skilful feints, and thrusts of lightning-like rapidity. The count was fiery and the colonel dexterous. This lasted for a moment. Then La Jonquière, after parrying a rapid thrust, caught his adversary's sword with wonderful skill and strength, and made it fly to the opposite end of the room. The count, thus disarmed, uttered a cry of rage, and was about to throw himself upon the colonel and seize him round the body, at the risk of being run through. But Terne caught him by the belt and stopped him. Then La Jonquière quietly put up his sword, picked up Horn's weapon, and brought it to him, saying in the politest manner: "Now, count, that you have done me the honour of crossing swords with me, I hope that you will not refuse to hear what prevented the chevalier and myself from going last night to the Gloriettes quarry."

Horn was born proud and fiery; but he was not incapable of appreciating generous conduct. He took the sword offered him by the colonel, put it up, and said, not without reddening slightly: "I do not hesitate, sir, to admit that I was wrong. I was too hasty in drawing my sword, and you have shown me that I should do well to study fencing again. I admit that I am conquered, and I even allow that I have no right to require any explanation."

"And I, count," replied La Jonquière, eagerly, "am ready to tell you everything likely to interest you. Be good enough to take a seat at our friend Terne's fireside, and listen to me."

Horn did so without further ceremony. The chevalier acted likewise, and the colonel then began. "Well, count, I am not surprised that you should have thought very ill of me, after what happened last night; I can easily understand that you might easily accuse me of treason, but you will forgive me when I tell you that a serious incident happened yesterday, and I was obliged for the time to give up our project."

"Very well, sir," said the young nobleman; "you might, at least,

have informed me of the change of plan. By sending me a counter-order, you would have spared me a useless and even dangerous journey."

"I did so, count, and I deeply regret that my messenger did not find you at home. My lieutenant, Mille, went in the afternoon to tell you that the expedition could not take place. Unfortunately you were not at home. He was told that you had gone out in company with your servant, and not knowing where to find you, he could not give you my message. I was the more sorry for it, as you were exposed to meeting Argenson's men at the quarry."

"Well, may I know why, after settling everything in view of abducting Philip of Orleans last night, you so suddenly changed your mind?"

"Why, at the moment when I was leaving the chevalier to give my last orders to my men, some one came to tell me that our plans were known to that rascal, Dubois, that his police were on the look-out, that the quarry at Vanves was surrounded, and that if we went there, we should be caught in a trap. I at once renounced our project. I lost no time in stopping our soldiers, who were about to set off, and I succeeded in finding them, but I was not fortunate enough to find you."

"You acted with admirable prudence," said Horn, coldly. "But I remained several hours alone with my servant in the quarry, and Dubois' men did not appear. I crossed the plains of Vanves by night, and I did not meet any of them. Do you think that, if they had been hidden about there, they would have suffered me to go away quietly?"

"This is indeed strange!" muttered the colonel. "You were not attacked, count, and met no one?"

"No one belonging to the watch or the marshalsea," replied the count, evasively, for he did not care to talk of his meeting with the executioner of Paris.

"Perhaps these fellows had orders only to act in case my troop should appear together, so as to entrap us all at once. Besides, they could not know that you belonged to us."

"Those are poor reasons, colonel, you must admit; it looks more as though you had been tricked. Who knows whether there is not some snare in all this? In your place I should mistrust your obliging informant."

Here the chevalier interposed. "Our information," said he, "came from a poor deformed girl, who brings me my linen, and who has no interest in lying. Her father is a detective—I only learned that yesterday—and Providence permitted that she should overhear, from her own room, this man's conversation with Dubois' secretary. He spoke of the conspirators, whom he intended to arrest in the evening in the plains of Vanves. An instant before the name of Lestang had caught the girl's ear. The detective was speaking of me. She could not understand what he was saying, but she feared that I was one of the conspirators, and she made haste to come and tell me all she knew."

"Without her respectable father's leave, I presume?"

"Her father had gone to the Palais Royal, where the minister was waiting for him to arrange matters for surrounding the Gloriettes quarry."

"By heaven! chevalier," said the count, with a mocking air, "you certainly succeed in inspiring tender feelings in young girls! You think, then, that this one was acting in all good faith?"

"I was here when she came," said La Jonquière; "I heard what she said. I questioned her myself, and believe that her statement was true."

"Still that does not explain how and by whom you have been denounced to Dubois."

"I can guess that. The Regent himself has betrayed us unknowingly. He must have talked of the matter to some one of his mistresses, or the gay fellows about him, and said that he intended going, last night, to evoke the fiend at the bottom of a quarry. The confidante, or the lady, carried the news to Dubois. He scented that there was some plot of abduction under all this magic, and took his measures accordingly."

"But how could the detective have found out the chevalier's false name? Who told him that 'M. Lestang' was mixed up in the plot?"

"I think," said Terne, not without some embarrassment, "that it was the girl herself who betrayed this without intending to do so. She overheard me while I was talking to Blanche-Barbe's daughter in the Allée de Vénise. The detective is the man whom we met that day in the Rue Quincampoix, and quarrelled with. He must have remembered that I defended Violet from him that morning, and have recognised me, from his daughter's description."

"The devil! this fellow may arrest you at any moment. He must be furious at having failed in his expedition to Vanves."

"Yes," said the colonel, "but this man will not appear this morning. He must have passed the night out with the men whom he directs, and will scarcely have had time to get home. Besides, I doubt whether he will think of looking for us here. He does not know that we have been warned, and I'll wager that he still hopes to catch us all in his net, in the Vanves plains, for he must feel sure that we shall begin again, although we have failed to-night."

"These are mere suppositions, colonel, and prudence requires——"

"Prudence requires that the chevalier should go away from here at once, that is certain, and he intends doing so; but, meantime, we have found a means of safety in case of surprise. In the middle of that wood-work over there is a panel which can be moved back at will, and on the other side there is the staircase of the next house, which faces the Rue du Petit Musc. If the detective takes it into his head to invade Master La Perrelle's house, with his men, we can make off."

"That is excellent, colonel," said Horn. "But one more question. Do you now intend to carry on your scheme of abduction in some other shape, or to give it up altogether?"

"Give it up!" shouted La Jonquière, "never! So long as I am able to mount a horse, or, rather, so long as I have a drop of blood in my veins, I will pursue my purpose. My hatred for Philip of Orleans will last as long as I live, and our friend Terne is not much fonder than I am of this 'Prince Charming.' But the enterprise must now be conducted on an entirely new plan."

"Have you formed that new plan?"

"Yes; abandon stratagem, and have recourse simply to force. Madame de Parabère has a small house at Asnières, where she will go to stay as soon as the weather becomes pleasant, and the Regent will not fail to go there also, *incognito*. We will wait for him some fine night at a turn in the road, we will attack his escort, which is never very numerous, and we can easily scatter it. We can even kill the lackeys, if they cry out or resist. Two of our men will spring into the carriage and keep Philip quiet by putting a pistol to his head. A third will mount upon the box, and drive towards Orleans, where relays will be ready. The

chevalier and I will gallop at the doors on each side of the carriage. I am almost sure that we shall succeed ; still, in all that, count, I find no chance for a duel between you and the duke alone."

"Who knows ?" said Horn, quickly. "The attack will take place near Asnières, will it not ?"

"At a hundred paces from the river, before you come to the ferry boat."

"Shall you soon make the attempt ?"

"The marchioness only goes to her little villa in the spring, but it seems to me that the month of March will not pass by without giving us a chance to effect what we desire."

"Thanks, colonel, I know all that I wished to know, and I now have only to ask a favour of you. Promise me to let me know your plans on the morning of the day when you purpose carrying off the Regent."

"Will you join us ?"

"Perhaps."

"That hope suffices, and I promise you shall know in time ; meanwhile, count, you are free to do as you please."

"That is as I wish. But where can I find you if I wish to speak with you ?"

"I know of no better place than Blanche-Barbe's house. We have there, you know, a resort which Dubois' police will never discover, and which will be our headquarters more than ever, for the chevalier cannot stay here much longer. At whatever hour you may present yourself at the tavern of the Epée de Bois, Blanche-Barbe or Dame Margot will introduce you by the secret stairway."

"And I, for my part, count," added Terne, "shall always be glad to see you."

Horn then held out his hand frankly to the chevalier, for whom he had a genuine liking, and rose to take leave. "One word more," said La Jonquière. "When the day for action arrives, where shall I send my message ?"

"To my hotel in the Rue Dauphine," replied the count, after a moment's hesitation. "If you do not find me, Liévin, my servant, will receive the message, and bring it to me wherever I may be." The conference was now at an end. The pair bowed politely and parted.

IX.

ON the morrow of this confab between the three conspirators, the Regent was holding council in the private apartments of the Palais Royal with Dubois and Law. Philip never allowed his favourites or gay companions to take part in any serious affair. Dubois that morning formally accused the duke of having committed some act of indiscretion which had caused the plan for arresting the conspirators to fail. The Regent, who, unlike his minister, was in the best of humours, laughed in his face, and it was necessary, in order to speak seriously with him, for Dubois to declare that he was compromising the safety of the young King, Louis XV., by his indifference and inertia, and to state that the conspirators would end by attacking the sovereign also. The duke did not like any joking upon this subject, and it is to his honour in history that he always watched with solicitude over the boy whose death would have made him King

of France. "If this be so," said he to Dubois, "if these foreign emissaries dare threaten the life of his Majesty, I will allow you to track them like wild beasts, and I will sign all the orders that you may ask for to that effect. But, for Heaven's sake ! take a little less trouble about me, for, if this goes on, I shall not be able to visit my daughter, the Duchess de Berry, at the Luxembourg, or to take supper with the marchioness without having all the detectives at my heels as well as all the watch afoot and mounted."

"Ah, by the powers ! that would be none too many," cried the irascible minister ; "for, by the turn things are taking, you will soon have to call out the whole regiment of the French Guard to shield you."

"Dubois, my friend, you exaggerate."

"You think so ? Well, do you know what your infernal colonel has done, after having tricked you so nicely ?"

"I know that I went to wait for him at the Croix du Trahoir, where I had an appointment with him, and that he did not come—if it be true, as you assume, that La Jonquière has succeeded in making me take him for Angelo Baroni. Now, one of two things : either the commander will present himself again at the Palais Royal, and then we shall see whether he is a sham Italian or not ; or he will not return at all, and in that case I need disturb myself no more about him, for he will have given up his attempt, and re-crossed the frontier."

"Ah ! but first, do you remember a fellow whom you saw in my apartments last week, and who said that he had positively recognised La Jonquière under the disguise of your so-called Baroni ?"

"I remember him perfectly. He is the same fellow who undertook, at the opera ball, to find the assassins of that poor devil who was so basely stabbed. He looked like a very intelligent man."

"So intelligent that I sent for him as soon as I learned, through your valet, that you were going to run about the country with your friend the commander, and gave him orders to surround the quarry where you hoped to see the devil."

"Did he go there ?"

"He went, and he has not returned, my lord."

"What ! have those scoundrels killed him ?" demanded the Regent, frowning.

"I do not know," replied Dubois, "but I do know that he set out for Vanves at nightfall, after having given orders to his men, and from that moment no one has seen anything of him. He himself was to watch at the bottom of the quarry, around which the others were told to hide. His second man, a detective, who took his place in the command of the men, waited in vain for the signal agreed upon, remained at his post till daylight, and then made up his mind to go down into the gap, where he saw some traces of blood, but nothing more. So it looks as if this man Larfaillé were dead."

"That is but too probable, and this poor fellow's murder shall not go unpunished."

"Well, what do you think of men being so well informed as to avoid the snare which I had set for them, and bold enough to assassinate my agent at a few yards from his men ; skilful enough, besides, to spirit away his body and vanish themselves without having been seen or heard by those who were on the look-out for them ?"

"I think that your detective has had to deal with a very dangerous and

skilful band of ruffians, but I do not know why you impute these evil deeds to La Jonquière."

"Why? Would you like to know the opinion of their victim on that point? Here! I will show you the papers; this is one," said Dubois, taking from his pocket a paper which he held out to the Regent.

The Duke of Orleans unfolded the paper, and read aloud:—"Monseigneur,—This letter will not be handed to you unless I fail to return from this evening's errand. If I do not appear at the Châtelet in the course of to-morrow I shall be dead, assassinated by those who killed my comrade and friend, Firmin Desgrais. For this reason I take the liberty to ask you, monseigneur, to protect an orphan whom I have brought up as my daughter. Her name is Gudule, she lives with me, and Master Crozart, the notary of the Châtelet, will tell you all about her; I have left her, by my will, the little that I possess; but she will scarcely have enough to live upon. I therefore beg you, monseigneur, to honour her by your kindness in consideration of her adoptive father having died in the service of the State."

"That is a good man!" exclaimed the Regent. "What he asks must be done."

"Good, we shall see to that later on, but proceed."

The duke went on reading the petition of the unfortunate Larfaillé: "If I perish in my undertaking," said the letter, "it will be that I shall have come across Colonel La Jonquière. He alone is capable of conquering me and my men, and so long as he is not captured, the safety of the Regent will be in danger. It is necessary for the peace of the State that this dangerous enemy should be pursued without relaxation until it is impossible for him to do any harm. I shall at my last moment regret not having been able to conquer him myself; but, in that case, my subordinate, Pillavoine—who is my other self—will furnish you, monseigneur, with all useful information by which to capture the colonel and his band. In the hope that you will deign to look favourably upon my request, I remain humbly, your devoted and obedient, etc., etc."

"Do you know that this poor fellow is a hero, Dubois?" said Philip of Orleans, touched by so much simplicity and resignation. "He foresees that he may die, and yet he only thinks of his daughter and of me. This is truly admirable!"

"Yes," interrupted the minister, "but what is more wonderful is your own carelessness as to what personally concerns you. I did not give you this letter to read to make you compassionate the fate of an insignificant detective, but to show you the danger which threatens you. Do you, in good faith, doubt that this matter has been conducted by La Jonquière?"

"That unfortunate man has not reappeared, then?" muttered the Regent, instead of replying to the question.

"The letter was given this morning to my secretary, by a bailiff from the Châtelet, who had it from Larfaillé. This man, who is his friend, waited for him all day yesterday, and, not seeing him return, executed his orders by bringing me this species of will."

"And what did you do then? I hope that you thought of helping the girl?"

"There you go again! Ah! it is of no use! You will always be the same! I have a deal of time, have I not, to think of the creature? You ask me what I did? I at once sent for Pillavoine, the detective, Larfaillé's assistant during his lifetime, and his natural successor. I questioned him,

so as to find out what instructions the deceased had left, and I have already got precious information. Larfaillé, it appears, was convinced—that he said to me himself—that the head-quarters of the band were at an inn, with the sign of the Epée de Bois; and Pillavoine is of the same mind. Now, do you remember the flower-girl we spoke of last week?"

"Yes—I do," replied the Regent after slight hesitation.

Law, who was listening attentively, began to smile. "Well," resumed Dubois, "Pillavoine, who was in the expedition against this creature, affirms that Larfaillé was right, and that she was the sweetheart of one of La Jonquière's lieutenants; this coincides with his belief that the Epée de Bois served as a meeting-place for the colonel and his men. He knows the approaches from having watched them under his chief's orders, and he says that he can capture all these rascals. Now, as La Jonquière will not be such a fool as to again appear at the Palais Royal, we must take some resolutions."

"Very well, what do you think it best to do?"

"I have not decided. I am deliberating, and I am vexed with Larfaillé, whom you all admire so much. He told Venier, my secretary, that he had found out where one of the colonel's lieutenants resided, and Venier, like a fool, did not think of asking him where this man was hidden. But the worst of it is, that Larfaillé did not say a word of this to Pillavoine either. Well, we have only the choice between two operations: either to surround the inn to-night, and let the watch enter, search the place, and arrest everybody whom they find there; or else to carry off the flower-girl, put her in prison where she can be made to speak by being threatened with torture, and, at the same time, spread about a rumour that she has been shut up in the Hôpital-Général, so as to induce her lover to go there. He won't fail to prowl about, and if he does so, Pillavoine will find him. By this means the colonel may be tracked, and if nothing can be extorted from the girl, we can send her to the banks of the Mississippi. But all this would require a deal of time, and I am more inclined to make an attack upon the inn. It can be burned down, if necessary, and the owls will be driven from their holes."

"Come," said Law, with a smile, "I make a protest in favour of the birds at the Epée de Bois; they are not all of the same feather, for our richest brokers frequent Master Blanche-Barbe's tavern; and if you set fire to the place, you will tamper seriously with the stock of the India Company. Monseigneur," added the financier, addressing the Regent, "I think that the State should not tamper with the facilities for speculation. If you desire that financial affairs should prosper be careful not to injure those who uphold the system."

"This deserves attention," muttered the duke. "What do you propose, then, Law?"

"That you should confine yourself to watching the inn carefully, and that you should carry off the flower-girl."

"Oho!" said Philip, laughing. "Is that because the girl is very pretty?"

"I swear to you, monseigneur, that in this matter, I am only thinking of your safety, and the good of the kingdom. By sacking the inn you would only succeed in frightening some peaceful dealers, whereas by arresting this creature you may find the clue to the conspiracy."

"What do you think, Dubois?" asked the duke

"Well, I think it will be as well to begin by that, and then return to the Epée de Bois, if the first means does not answer our purpose."

"Do as you please, but do not forget the detective's request. His daughter must have a place and a pension in my household."

"I will attend to her," said Dubois, rising to depart and give his orders. "And the flower-girl also shall be attended to, and that is the most urgent matter," added he, between his teeth.

Violet, who was thus threatened, had not seen the chevalier since he had gone to entreat her to leave France with him, on the day when Gudule had made her appearance, and interrupted the interview. Louis du Terne had hastened away, promising to see the young girl again that evening, but he had not returned either that evening or the morrow, or the day after. This was the more bitter to Violet, as after her lover's departure she had finally decided to yield to his entreaties and follow him to Spain, to marry him there. Gudule had something to do with this sudden change, and yet the poor deformed creature did not dream that she had in any way influenced the resolution taken by Violet. That interview had been a fatal one, for it had separated two beings made to love one another—as these young girls were—and condemned each of them to suffer through the other. Blanche-Barbe's daughter had resolved to leave home and rely upon Terne's promises. She was pained, of course, to leave her mother and thus grieve her, for her mother had always been kind to her; but it must be confessed that she cared little for what would be thought of her conduct by the brutal innkeeper. To set her conscience at ease, Violet resolved to write to Dame Margot as soon as she was married, to implore her pardon and assure her of the delight with which she would be received in a foreign land if she cared to come to her. This was little towards repairing her conduct, and she might, indeed, be blamed; but Violet could bring forward in extenuation the remembrance of her saddened childhood and oppressed girlhood, the bitterness of her poor heart, condemned to silent endurance of sorrow, for Dame Margot herself, reduced by her terrible husband to a state of fear and submission which was like slavery, did not dare to ask her daughter's confidence. Scarcely did she silently dare to love her; and when Violet was by, and her mother's eyes followed her about, often full of tears, it was easy to guess that Master Blanche-Barbe had forbidden any demonstrations of tenderness in his family. If the girl were guilty in taking this resolution to leave her parents, she was, however, already cruelly punished, for she had heard nothing of the chevalier for three long days.

She felt by turns angry, vexed, and jealous. She said to herself that Louis du Terne was treating her unworthily, for, in spite of herself, Gudule's image was always before her mind, and the thought would not leave her mind that the chevalier was unfaithful. Violet felt that the poor deformed girl might, after all, inspire love that would be all the more intense from the fact that Gudule's undeniable plainness would in the first place be overlooked. Then her imagination carried her away; she confusedly divined circumstances in Terne's life of which she had been ignorant before; she cursed her own credulity, and reproached herself for having listened for a moment to his promises, and said to herself that she had committed a crime in having, for an instant, preferred this man's love to her mother's. Then disquietude came as to the chevalier's fate, and with it remorse at having mistrusted him. He did not reappear, and on the evening when he had seen her he had told her he was about to risk his life. Instead of accusing him of deceit, would it not be far more reasonable to believe that he had met with some misfortune? Violet

was not initiated into all the secrets of the conspiracy, but she knew that Terne was conspiring in conjunction with La Jonquière, and that was enough. The most frightful suppositions were but natural when a man, engaged in such an affair, disappeared, struggling as he was against the kingdom, the Regent, the ministers, and the detectives—an army against a handful of bold men. Everything betokened some decisive move lost by the conspirators. The chevalier must be dead or in prison. "If he were alive and free he would have come to tell me so," said the girl to herself when the second day was drawing to a close. Then she forgot Gudule to think only of him whom she still adored. What had become of him? La Jonquière, contrary to his usual habit, had not appeared at the Epée de Bois. His lieutenant, Lorenzo de Mille, had not shown himself there either, nor had any of the suspicious-looking men appeared whom Violet had often remarked in company with the colonel. This sudden vanishing might indicate either that they were captured, or that they had succeeded in their attempt, and left Paris, as Terne had said might be the case. Master Blanche-Barbe, their accomplice, or, at all events, assistant, must know the truth, but his daughter would not have dared to question him on any account. The innkeeper appeared more gloomy and irritable than ever. He looked at Violet so darkly, and watched her so closely, that she had not been able, unseen, to speak to Dame Margot, who might, perhaps, have been able to give her some information. Every morning Blanche-Barbe took his daughter to her stall, where she was condemned to toil till night. He came several times during the day to the threshold of the inn to make sure that she was doing her work properly; at nightfall he made her return to wait upon the customers; and later on he conducted her to her room and locked her up in it. The unhappy girl suffered without complaining, but she felt death within her heart. On the evening of the third day she was seated, as usual, over her work, with her eyes dull and lifeless, and yielding to a weight of grief which seemed to deprive her even of the power of thought; when, on raising her head, she saw before her a man attired like an humble citizen, who held a pair of blue stockings in his hand. This apparition was not surprising, for, as her ill luck would have it, she had a great deal of work brought to her, work which would not be delayed. She was going to ask this tardy customer what she could do for him, when he said to her in a low tone: "Mademoiselle, listen to me without showing any surprise, and if any one comes, take this pair of stockings and pretend to be mending them."

The young girl stared at him, but his honest face reassured her at once. "Mademoiselle," resumed the man, lowering his voice, "I have been sent to you by some one whom you love and who loves you."

"The Chevalier du Terne!" exclaimed Violet.

"That is the man," replied the customer, whose eyes shone for an instant.

"What has happened to him? Speak, I implore you, speak! I have not seen him for three days, and I am wild with anxiety."

If the stranger had been ignorant that Terne had not shown himself at the Epée du Bois, Violet, by saying these words, would have furnished him with the pretext required. "Alas! he is very ill, mademoiselle, and he longs to see you," resumed the man, heaving a sigh.

"Ill! Wounded, perhaps! Where is he?"

"I have been sent here to take you to him."

"Let us go at once!" exclaimed the young girl, rising, pale with emotion.

"Not together. We must not be seen."

"Yes, yes, I know he is concealing himself, that he is proscribed —"

"He is waiting for you at the corner of the Rue Quincampoix, at the entrance of the lane where the out-houses of the India Company's offices are. But come at once!" As he spoke, the quiet-looking citizen went rapidly off, and disappeared round the corner of the Allée de Venise.

This was the hour at which Blanche-Barbe's customers began to pour in, but the innkeeper did not appear. Violet, pale and agitated, flung her cloak over her shoulders and ran to the place spoken of by the stranger. She found him there, and they walked on together for a short distance. It was nightfall, and the lane was deserted. But as soon as they had passed the offices of the company four men darted out of a carriage-way, seized the young girl, wrapped her cloak about her head, and carried her off before she could utter a single cry.

The Chevalier du Terne had excellent reasons for not appearing at the Epée de Bois, or in its neighbourhood, and while Violet was grieving at his absence he was raging at heart at not seeing her, but was constrained to remain quietly in his humble lodgings in the Rue Saint-Antoine. La Jonquière had, in his wisdom, decided that his lieutenant ought not to leave Master La Perrelle's house until Mille, whom he had charged with finding another lodging for him, had done so, and secured a much safer place. Terne did not possess the colonel's talent for disguising himself; and it would have been very imprudent for him to show himself in Paris at a time when all Dubois' police were about; but by remaining quietly at home he had, in case of surprise, the resource of being able to fly by the movable panel. He would have given a great deal to be able to write to Violet to reassure her, but to whom could he confide the message? Not, assuredly, to La Jonquière, for the latter disapproved of the love affair, and would have refused to undertake the mission. Still less to Horn, who looked down upon the flower-girl from the height of his grandeur, and would have laughed at his friend's tender solicitude. As for Lorenzo de Mille, Terne had too little esteem for him to take him into his confidence, and the rest of the conspirators were not worth a thought. He was thus forced to restrain his impatience, but when the fourth day had come, he could not bear any more suspense, and putting on the citizen's dress which he wore when he wished to disguise himself, he repaired, at the risk of being reproached by La Jonquière, to the Allée de Venise. It was at the early morning hour when Master Blanche-Barbe was in the habit of going to buy provisions. Terne hoped to find Violet at her post, mending, and trusted that he might be able to speak to her undisturbed. But, alas! as Terne had set foot in the lane his heart fell. He saw at once that there was no one at the stand.

He was for an instant tempted to go away, but he had not come so far to depart without having seen Violet, so he walked on, determined to wait for her, and, if necessary, to enter the tavern to ask Dame Margot about her. While he was yet sadly gazing at Violet's stall, the tavern door opened, and the chevalier turning, found himself face to face with the landlord. He uttered an exclamation of surprise, to which Blanche-Barbe replied by an angry growl. "What are you after here?" said Blanche-Barbe. "Jeanneton, I suppose? Well, look for her somewhere else, for she's gone and won't return."

"Gone!" exclaimed the chevalier, who did not understand.

"Gone with a man who came for her last evening, and whom she

followed of her own free will for two hundred paces from this place. There she met four armed policemen who were waiting for her and carried her off. What do you say to that, my gentleman?" demanded the inn-keeper, with a sneer.

"You wretch!" exclaimed Terne, in exasperation, "is it you, her father, who dares to speak of her thus? What did you do to rescue her?"

"Nothing."

"And you think that this can be allowed? You think that I shall imitate your unworthy conduct? Where is your daughter? I wish to know, I wish to save her, as you are so unnatural as to be indifferent to her fate."

"Go and ask the head of the police what has become of her, unless you prefer to go to M. Law," answered Blanche-Barbe, in a mocking tone.

"What do you mean by that?"

"That Jeanneton has ended as she was destined to end. Girls who run about the streets selling flowers do not like to be set sewing, and end like that. What have you to complain of?"

"This is too much!" exclaimed the chevalier, about to throw himself upon the innkeeper.

"Gently, my gentleman. You have no sword with you, and I could knock you down with a single blow if you undertook to molest me. You had better go your way and not bother me any more about Jeanneton." After this speech, Blanche-Barbe went back into his tavern and shut the door in the face of the chevalier, who uttered a cry of rage and went off at a run. Where was he about to go? He did not know himself. The news he had heard had so disturbed him, that he was almost a maniac. He went on haphazard, gesticulating furiously, shaking his fist, striking his breast, talking aloud, and jostling the passers-by. This mad run along the streets lasted till he came to the Rue Saint-Antoine, within a hundred paces of his own lodging, to which he had instinctively returned. An idea had suddenly entered his mind, all troubled as it was. He asked himself who could have abducted Violet, and thought that it must of a certainty be the detective who had already attempted to do so in the Rue Quincampoix. Then he remembered that this detective had a daughter, Gudule, who had sought him out to reveal her father's projects. Terne had then easily guessed that Gudule loved him, although he had until that day scarcely looked at her. This discovery had annoyed him, for he could not but pity the poor girl for a love which must cause her suffering. It now occurred to him that if she loved him she must be jealous, and jealous of Violet. The meeting of the young girls in the Allée de Venise returned to his mind. "Yes," he muttered, "I see it all now. Gudule wished to save me because she loves me, and to ruin poor Violet because she hates her, and is fully aware that with such a rival she cannot hope for my affection. She has informed against her to her father, and the spy has laid some trap for Violet." Then he added, grinding his teeth, "I will be avenged! I will be avenged!" He began once more to walk with long strides toward Master La Perrelle's house, and other thoughts entered his mind. Instead of trying to punish an unfortunate creature unworthy of his anger, would it not be better to make use of her to find Violet again? "She will return," said Terne to himself, "she will present herself before me, for she will not dream that I have guessed her treachery. If I am even obliged to employ falsehood to move her, or violence to frighten her, I

must extort her secret from her ; she must tell me to what prison her victim has been dragged, and into what vile trap she has fallen."

This new plan was not a bad one, in appearance at least, for the chevalier was ignorant that Larfaille had taken no part in the abduction of the flower-girl. But to execute this plan, he must find Gudule, and how could he manage that ? It was imprudent for him to run about Paris. While turning the matter over in his mind, and trying to solve the problem, Terne stopped before the shop of his landlord, La Perrelle. The latter at the moment was standing at the window and drumming upon the panes with his finger-tips, and he gave a friendly nod to the chevalier, who hastily returned it and went into the alley. The mercer's politeness proved that nothing disagreeable had happened, for La Perrelle would certainly not have bowed to his tenant if the watch had called to arrest the latter. Terne went quickly up stairs and in front of his rooms he saw a woman who seemed to be weeping. She raised her head and he recognised Gudule. " You here ! " he exclaimed.

Gudule looked at him with her large blue eyes full of tears, and lacked the courage to reply. The place was ill-fitted for questioning her. Terne immediately opened the door of his apartment, raised the young girl by holding out both hands to her, and brought her in. " I have her now, " thought he ; " Heaven has sent her here."

Having carefully bolted the door, in order to secure time to fly in case of surprise, the chevalier led Gudule to the farthest room, that in which La Jonquière and Horn had fought a few days before. He brought an arm-chair up to the fire, leant his elbow upon the mantelpiece, crossed his arms, and said to the girl in a harsh tone : " What did you come here for ? Are you looking for her whom you have betrayed to your father ? You must know that he has carried her off in a most treacherous manner. Do you now mean to betray me also to the detectives ? "

The girl turned pale : she raised her hands, as if to protest, muttered a few inarticulate words, and swooned. Terne's anger suddenly vanished. Gudule, after all, was a woman, and he could not refuse to succour her. He used all the usual restoratives—wetting her temples with cold water, rubbing the palms of her hands, and applying vinegar to her nose. The poor young creature at last opened her eyes and closed them again at once, when she saw the chevalier kneeling before her. She perhaps for a moment imagined that he was at her feet, telling her that he loved her, and she wished to prolong the illusion. " Pardon me, my child, for having been so harsh, " said the chevalier. " I may have accused you wrongfully, and I hope that I was mistaken. Explain yourself."

" Alas ! what can I explain ? " sobbed Gudule.

" I ask you to tell me what has become of a young girl whom I love, and whom you well know, for you saw me talking with her in the Allée de Venise."

" I know her and I know that you love her. What has happened to her ? " This was said so simply and in so sad and gentle a tone, that Terne felt his prejudices against Gudule vanish.

" Last evening, at twilight, " said he, dwelling upon his words, " this young girl was induced to enter a deserted lane, and she was there seized by police-agents, who dragged her away without its being known to any one where they were taking her. It is I, undoubtedly, whom these wretches wish to reach by abducting Violet. Remember, it is known that I conspire ; I am being looked for, and traps are set for me ; you

told me this yourself only the other day when, urged by a feeling for which I am grateful to you, you came to tell me that your father would arrest me that very evening, with all my friends. Thanks to you, I avoided the snare prepared for me in the plains at Vanves; but your father is a police agent, and I cannot attribute this new attempt to any one but him."

"You suspect my father, then, and you thought, did you not," said Gudule, with suppressed emotion, "that it was jealousy had urged me to commit this infamous act? You thought that a miserable being like myself could not, without envy, behold the fortunate and charming woman whom you love? You thought that, instead of resigning myself to the disgrace and shame which Heaven has laid upon me, I should work in the dark to bring about I know not what base revenge? Is this my reward for having departed from my duty to preserve you from danger?"

"I hope I am mistaken," said Terne, drily, "but appearances are against you—"

"Appearances!" repeated the young girl, bitterly; "is it on the strength of appearances that you assume this, without giving me a hearing? So be it. I have perhaps deserved this great injustice, but I beg of you to hear what I was about to say when you so unworthily accused me. He whom you accuse is dead."

"Dead! Your father—dead!"

"My father went off to execute the minister's orders and has not returned. When he left me he charged a friend to tell me that if I did not see him on the morrow of that fatal night I should see him no more. I was still awaiting him. This morning—I had been mourning for four long days—a man came to see me. He told me that my father had been killed by some enemies of the King, and then he spoke of a will, a pension, and attempted to console me. I listened without understanding him—he went away, telling me that he would return when I was calmer, but he will not find me, for I ran away, and—"

A sob rose in Gudule's throat, and the chevalier, as much moved as she, took her hand and said to her mildly: "I believe you, mademoiselle, I believe you, and I beg of you to pardon me."

She looked at him with eyes in which a gleam of hope was visible, and had the strength to rise, murmuring: "Thanks! Farewell!"

"Where are you going?" cried Terne.

"I am going to die," said Gudule, quietly. "I am alone in the world, and no one loves me."

The sincere grief expressed in these words was touching, and the chevalier read what was passing in the true heart which he had so cruelly wounded. No; Gudule, the detective's daughter, was not like her father, capable of doing evil work. She had not fallen so low as to deliver a rival over to the agents of the police. "Why do you say that no one loves you?" said Terne, warmly; "do you think I shall desert you when you have preserved me from my enemies?"

"I think that you will, perhaps, pity me, but I have not the courage to live on."

"Why, then, did you come here?"

At this question, which she had not expected, the young girl started and cast down her eyes; then, with a great effort, she replied: "I won't tell you a falsehood. I came to ask you to take me as your servant."

"What are you thinking of, my child?"

"Yes, your servant. Why should I blush to be that? Am I not an orphan, born in the humblest condition, and now threatened with isolation and shame? Ought I not to be happy to serve you in exchange for a little protection? But I do not deserve so much happiness, and, besides, it is a dream, mere madness!—you cannot take charge of me, I know—what could I do for you?—I am too weak to be a lackey and too ugly to be loved by you, and, besides, you love——" Gudule could not finish, for her lips refused to utter the name of Violet.

"Listen to me," said Terne, more touched than he wished to appear. "I swear to you, upon my honour as a gentleman, that I have the deepest, the truest affection for you, and that I will be your friend and your defender. If I were free, if I could do as I pleased, I should say to you: 'Come with me; you shall be my sister, and we will always remain together.' But I do not belong to myself, and I am called upon to consecrate what strength is left to me in delivering a woman whom——"

"Will you suffer me to help you?"

"What do you say?"

"In your turn you must listen to me. I wished to die, but I will resign myself to life if you allow me to believe that I can help you in your purpose. I shall have the courage to return to my poor father's house, to receive his friends, and to find out from them what is being plotted against you, what they have done with her; and I will come to tell you all I know, and perhaps I shall some day have the joy of rescuing her."

"You will do that?" exclaimed the chevalier. "But you do not know what danger awaits you. I am pursued, pointed out to all the police in the kingdom, and if it should be found out that you are connected with any undertaking of mine——"

"What matters that to me? I am ready to share your fate. Besides, how would it be guessed that I was acting for you? Who would suspect a detective's daughter?"

"But I am about to leave this lodging, which is not secure. I do not know where I may be to-morrow."

"It will suffice for me to see you for a moment every day."

"But if I went to see you I should risk compromising you."

"There is no need for you to come to me. Every evening at nightfall I will be on the Place Royale."

"I can meet you in disguise."

"Whatever disguise you may assume I shall recognise you," said Gudule, with a sad smile. "And now I ask you to swear to me that, if we find her whom you love, if Heaven enables you to leave France with her, you will suffer me to go with you both."

"I swear it, Gudule," answered the chevalier, respectfully kissing the orphan's hand.

X.

A MONTH had passed since Larfaillé, the detective, had disappeared. Spring had come, the flowers were budding, and little birds were singing their glad songs in the stately trees. The bright March sun gilded the pointed roofs of old Paris, the quaint Paris of that time; the sky was blue and the air balmy. The left shore of the Seine in those days was not, as now, without places of public entertainment, and its inhabitants, in order to divert themselves, were not obliged to cross the Pont Neuf or the Pont

Royal, then just built. On holidays the streets swarmed with idlers, going, some to the Enclos des Châtreux, where they played at bowls, others to the Saint-Germain fair, where all sorts of games were played. This is why, one fine day, in the week preceding Passion Week, no one was surprised at seeing two gentlemen, who seemed to be in high good humour, walk up the Rue Dauphine after coming out of the Hôtel de Flandre. The younger was Count de Horn, elegantly dressed, and carrying his head as high as ever. The other, less proud and less elegant, was Lorenzo de Mille, who had disguised himself, on this occasion, as a retired officer, in semi-military garb. The count and the Piedmontese adventurer, whom nature had never intended to harmonise, appeared all the same to be the best of friends. They chatted so gaily as to make some passers-by turn round, in astonishment at the dashing demeanour of this brace of cavaliers. "So, my dear captain," said Horn, "you assure me that the attempt will be made at Easter?"

"Everything leads me to believe so, count," replied Mille. "The colonel told me yesterday that the Regent, immediately after Holy Week, would not fail to go and visit the marchioness, who has left for Asnières to make her penitential 'retreat.'"

"Yes, yes, she has been for two days past at her little villa on the bank of the river."

"That's the place! Oh, we have the most accurate information, and although we have changed our batteries, we are none the less ready for the attack."

"Well, I certainly do wish my share of the revenge that Philip owes us. But what I admire is, that you have succeeded in so completely misleading Argenson's detectives, after our mishap in the Vanves plains, which set them all afoot."

"It is easy to see, count, that you do not know our La Jonquière. It is after a defeat that he performs the greatest marvels. He has given up passing himself off as Commander Baroni, an old comrade of the Regent's during the wars in Italy, and a great necromancer to boot. He now dresses himself as a mendicant friar, goes to the Superior of the Capuchin Fathers in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, persuades him that he has been sent by the Franciscans of Burgos to collect some money for keeping up I know not what chapel, and obtains permission to stay at the convent and make his collections in Paris. All of our fellows then received orders to disperse, to live like simple citizens, and to walk separately every day at a certain hour about the Pont Neuf, over which Don Blas, the alms-gatherer, passes daily with his jackass and his wallet."

"Good! I understand. When the time comes, he will make a sign to them."

"And all these good people will go for an evening walk near the Asnières ferry. Some indications have given the colonel cause to think that the tavern which Blanche-Barbe keeps has become suspicious to the police. So we do not meet any more at the Epée de Bois. The most I venture to do is to go and exchange a word or two with the innkeeper, when I find myself in that neighbourhood. He still retains the laudable habit of smoking at his door in the evening."

"All this is excellently well managed, my dear captain, and I presume that you have found a way to set every detective on the wrong track."

"I have taken the part, count, that best suits me; I have charge of the 'administration of foreign affairs.' It is I who am sent, as you know,

to keep up with your lordship the connection to which we attach such importance. Fortunately, my face is not known to Argenson's spies. I can, therefore, walk about freely, and I have taken lodgings at a good inn near the Porte Saint-Honoré, and pass myself off as a 'younger son' from Provence looking for a place."

"Good, indeed! But you tell me nothing of Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré."

"Oh! he has turned out badly; he is in love. Ah! count, the colonel is in the habit of saying that women were created by the fiend to ruin men, and he is right. Would you believe that that flower-girl, having disappeared one fine evening, either because she had been carried off by some great lord or other, the chevalier has lost his wits, and only thinks of finding her. He neglects all his duties as a conspirator, and we see him but seldom. He has gone to live near the Hôpital-Général, where he imagines that his beauty is shut up."

"That is a pity!" said Horn. "M. de Grandpré was a true gentleman and a good comrade. I should have been glad to find myself side by side with him when we charged at the Regent's escort."

"You will perhaps see him, count," resumed the Piedmontese, eagerly, "for I hope that he has not altogether deserted us, and that we shall find him again on the great day. But, since you speak of attacking the carriage, I must ask you to tell me exactly where the house which you have just bought at Asnières is situated."

"At a hundred paces from the Seine, almost in front of the ferry."

"Quite near Madame de Parabère's villa, then? It is there that I must repair to fetch you when the time comes to take matters in hand as regards the Regent."

"Yes, it is there."

"But, if I am not mistaken, you have not yet left your inn for your new house."

"I shall do so soon. The day after to-morrow, or perhaps to-morrow. I do not know exactly."

"Indeed. Excuse my questioning, but I thought that the marchioness had been making her 'retreat' during the last two days and that you would be anxious to get to Asnières."

"I am so, indeed, and if it depended upon me alone, and not on the notary who sold me that little bit of a house, I—— Just fancy, captain, that idiot will not give up the keys to me till I give him every penny of the purchase-money!"

"He must be a very saucy kind of notary."

"Now, I am expecting some money from my mother, and it has not come, and meantime, the days are passing by and the marchioness——"

"The marchioness is dull, of course! That is why I think, count, that it is about time to apply one of the colonel's favourite maxims. He always says that when a man wants money, he ought to gamble. Now, I know a certain faro-table, at the Saint-Germain-fair, whither we are now going, where you can obtain, I hope, the few thousand louis you need."

Lorenzo de Mille did not suspect that the advice he was giving exactly suited Count de Horn. He proposed to him to try his hand at cards, and the count had for the last three days been thinking of thus obtaining the money which he needed to buy the little house at Asnières. The young nobleman whom Mille thought so rich was, on the contrary, greatly embarrassed. He came of a princely house, but he was a younger son, and

consequently reduced to a small allowance. His mother, it is true, was the widow of Prince de Horn and the daughter of Prince de Ligne, and thus enjoyed a considerable fortune of her own, and frequently replenished the purse of this son of hers, whom she cherished all the more because the chance of birth had made him less fortunate than his elder brother. Very often, when young Captain Antoine Joseph de Horn was in garrison in Austria, the princess had come to his aid by paying his debts, unknown to Maximilian Emanuel, the head of the house. But the debts were no sooner paid, than Antoine Joseph ran into debt again, and his extravagance threatened to go so far that he had been sent from Vienna to the Château de Bausignies. He had found the abode of his ancestors so dull, and had so often threatened his mother and brother with doing some desperate deed, as going among the Turks, that with one accord they had decided to send him to Paris for a month or two, in order to calm his youthful ardour. The remedy, alas! had proved worse than the evil. Instead of calling on the Duke de Croi, the Marquis de Créquy, and many other great lords of the court of France, who were his relations, and who would have received him with open arms; instead of getting himself presented to the Regent and the King as his birth entitled him, young Antoine Joseph had plunged head first into low company and dissipation. The count had indeed spent a great deal of money, and his mother was thinking seriously of refusing supplies. She had even made up her mind to send a gentleman connected with her family to Paris to bring him back to Flanders. Thus he was unable to purchase the little house at Asnières, where he would be near Madame de Parabère, with whom he was so desperately in love. This house was priced at the bagatelle of thirty thousand livres. Unfortunately, these few paltry livres were not in Horn's possession. There remained to him but a hundred pistoles out of the very large amount of money which his mother had given him when he came away, and this was scarcely enough for his smallest expenses. Time was flying, there had been no reply to a very urgent letter to Flanders, and the supplies from the count's mother did not appear. Madame de Parabère had been at Asnières for some days past, and for want of a house Horn was losing an opportunity of seeing her such as would not again occur.

Lorenzo de Mille came to see the count from time to time, to keep him in the conspiracy. The crisis through which the hot-headed young noble was passing had on that day reached a climax, so it may be imagined that the proposal to repair to the gaming-table was well received; Horn taking good care to put in his pocket the hundred pistoles which were all he had in the world at the time. "Is there really anything like high play at this fair?" asked he.

"I should say so, indeed!" replied the captain. "My fellow-countryman, Razzetta, puts two thousand louis in the bank every morning, and keeps it open all day for all comers to have a chance."

"Two thousand louis!" muttered the count, "that is exactly what I want. Who is this Razzetta?"

"A Genoese, who came here last year, and obtained an authorisation from the lieutenant of the police to set up a public gaming-table while the fair lasts. It is said that Lord Stair, the English ambassador, carried off six thousand pistoles from him in one night."

"This Italian does not cheat, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. That would be contrary to his interests, as faro gives a

mathematical advantage to the person holding the bank ; and, besides, I believe him honest."

" Well, then, we will go and see him."

" You must excuse me, count, if I keep in the background there. I am, for the time being, entirely out of pocket."

" But I have something left, my dear captain," said Horn, rattling the gold in his pockets, " and if I win, as I hope to do, you shall have your share of the spoils."

" Upon my word, count, you have such generous ways that one would go through fire for your sake, and if you ever need my sword, which is the only thing I can dispose of, it is entirely at your service."

" Thanks, captain ! Are we far from the fair ?"

" It is quite near. Don't you see it down there ? There is the first row of booths."

As they chatted thus, the pair reached the corner of the Rue de Condé and the Rue des Quatre Vents, facing one of the buildings where, every year, the most popular fair in Paris was at that time held, from the third of February until Palm Sunday. It filled a vast site belonging to the Abbey of Saint Germain des Prés, and was intersected by roads bordered with wooden shanties, the most frequented of which were at the angle nearest the Rue de Tournon. There were jewellers, milliners, and coffee-houses there ; rope-dancers, puppet-shows, and strange animals on exhibition ; and, also, many foreign dealers with novel goods. But the cause of the popularity which the fair then enjoyed was the public gambling which had been allowed to go on after the death of Louis XIV., and was not interfered with during the Regency. On the morning alluded to, the alleys were full of lookers-on and purchasers, jostling and shouting almost as loudly as the jugglers upon the stagings. Brass instruments were in full blast, and open-air minstrels sang at the pitch of their voices ; children cried, too, and an indescribable tumult was the result. Mille, who knew the fair well, guided his companion through the labyrinth of stalls, and brought him up to a huge and rather elegant one, on the front of which was this enticing inscription—" Fifty thousand livres to be gained with one pistole." In spite of this tempting sign, the crowd did not gather about the altar raised by Signor Razzetta to the blind goddess, Fortune. At the Saint-Germain fair petty gamblers were more numerous than high players, and preferred much less showy gaming-tables, where they had not, it is true, a chance of winning so much, but could try their luck with a much smaller sum ; for in this privileged spot everybody had a chance to try. The Genoese adventurer could not be approached with less than a pistole, so to him lawyers' clerks, shopkeepers, and recruiting sergeants did not venture to repair. But the fine folks would have thought it a disgrace to risk their money elsewhere than at Razzetta's. That interesting personage, whilst waiting for some visitors to come up, was sitting behind a table covered with a green cloth. On his left hand were piles of louis and double louis in symmetrical rows, and on his right there were some cards.

Everything was near the passer-by, and conveniently within reach. There was no grating, not even a balustrade. It was gambling in an open shop, so to say. It is true that the banker had two tall negroes, one on each side, strangely attired, and leaning on huge canes, which were well calculated to break the bones of any one who might have ventured to touch the treasury. Razzetta himself was a mean-looking man, pale and thin,

with a cunning countenance, and eyes of alarming quickness—a true type of the Italian spy. He must have filled the office of *sbirro* in his native city. As soon as he saw two gentlemen of good appearance halt before his shanty he began to smirk graciously, and rose to give them, with an insinuating air, the two packs of cards before him. These, in faro, are called "livrets" or "books." Faro was very fashionable in the eighteenth century, and is still played at the present time to a great extent in Russia and the East. It was invented in the city of the Doges, where it was almost an institution of State, as the patricians whose names were in the Golden Book alone had the right to play it publicly, and in red garments. It was very much like what is now called *lansquenet*, which, by the way, is not at all like that game as played under Louis XIV. Every player had his "book" before him, and laid his stake upon one or several of the thirteen cards which composed it. The banker then drew his cards, one after another, from two large packs shuffled together. Of two cards drawn in succession, the first was for the banker, and the second for the player; it gave him all the money staked upon a corresponding card in his book. When two similar cards were played the player took half, and, moreover, he did not pay the last winning card of the deal. These details are indispensable that this now half-forgotten game may be understood. Horn knew them by heart, for there was not a gentleman at that time who had not a full knowledge of faro. Thus the count took up his book with a firm hand, and spread it out methodically upon the table. Mille did the same with his, but this was only for form's sake, for he said to Razzetta, tapping upon his waistcoat pocket: "Empty, gossip! That is why I shall only be a sham banker to-day. But my friend here can break the bank all by himself."

"As you please, my gentleman," said the Genoese, with another smile.

While he was tranquilly shuffling the cards, the count was making ready for the fray. He took a handful of gold from his pocket, and began to distribute his money upon a certain number of the cards of his book. To see the coolness of his proceedings, one would have supposed that his pockets were filled with double pistoles and bank-notes. Razzetta gave him a look which was designed to penetrate the true resources of this unknown adversary, and then began to deal. "Yours is a bad method," said the captain, in the count's ear; "great players never give out but one card at a time."

Horn shrugged his shoulders, and let his money stay where it was. The Italian began to deal slowly, coolly, and in a masterly way, like a man used to braving the fire of *paroli*, and full of faith in the *doublet* and the last card. The two negroes remained motionless and indifferent, but some idlers stopped to look on at the struggle as it went on. It began with varied chances. At the fifteenth drawing Horn had lost on three cards and had won on one, which had come out second three times. Fortunately this card, the queen of spades, bore his heaviest stake—six brand new louis. He had then followed the usage in *paroli*, and the six louis represented forty-eight. "The marchioness is a brunette; a dark queen must bring good luck," laughed the captain.

He had scarcely uttered this prophecy before it was fulfilled. The queen again proved second. This time Razzetta silently held out two piles of louis, and the count, excited by this success, began to attack with bigger guns. But he followed the captain's advice this time. He left

fifty louis upon the queen of spades, and forty upon the ace of hearts. Five minutes later the queen lost, after having already won three times, and the ace, on the contrary, won the four hundred and eighty louis at the third *paroli*. "The marchioness is behaving very badly," sneered Mille; "in your place I should let her go."

The young count took the hint, and brought all his forces to bear upon the ace. The ace came out on the right side. At the fortieth draw, Horn had won nineteen hundred and twenty louis, which represented a little more than forty-six thousand livres. The little house at Asnières cost but thirty thousand. While the banker was pushing a pile of gold towards him, Horn was thinking of the delight which he would experience in an hour's time in throwing the money in the face of the notary who had the house for sale, and the still greater delight of obtaining possession of the key from that spectacled old dragon. The negroes were rolling the whites of their eyes about, and Mille was jumping with joy. The idlers looking on loudly expressed their admiration. Razzetta alone did not appear to be any more disturbed than if his louis had been small coin. A close observer might have discovered that his thin lips had become somewhat more pinched, but that was all. "My gentleman," said he, in the calmest tone imaginable, "I never pay beyond my bank. You have won forty-six thousand livres, and my bank is but fifty thousand. There are about four thousand in the game, and I shall be delighted to pay them to you presently, if fortune continues to favour you."

The count put forth his hand to take up and pocket his gold. Unfortunately, he thought that he detected an ironical smile playing about Razzetta's thin lips. "That death's-head there looks as though he fancied that I was afraid of losing the paltry overplus," thought he, and he said aloud, "Stake the four thousand livres!"

"Good!" said the Italian. He dealt out the cards, and had an ace at once. Horn had lost. The banker drew the four hundred pistoles towards his side of the table and looked fixedly at Horn. "Stake the eight thousand livres!" cried the count. At the third drawing the ace came out first again. The luck was decidedly changing. Then, greatly annoyed, Horn staked sixteen thousand livres and lost, and thenceforward it was less a fight than a rout. In a game of chance a banker is almost in the same situation as the commander of a besieged fort. When the assault is repulsed the assailant is often obliged to raise the siege. Four times more did the fatal ace appear, and the fourth time it swept away the last pistole remaining in the Count de Horn's pocket. Lorenzo de Mille had watched the game with great anxiety. "What a fool I am," exclaimed he, "not to have warned you that Law and the ace of hearts mean one and the same thing! The devil fly away with the cursed Scotchman who has brought us such mischance!" As an Italian, Mille was naturally superstitious, and the connection which he declared existed between Law, who was called the "Ace of Hearts," and the card which had now ruined the Count de Horn, was, it must be confessed, a very childish fancy. But when a man loses at cards, he seizes at anything as a reason for it, and Horn rejoined: "You are right, captain, that scamp of a Scotchman has brought me this bad luck."

Then, turning his back upon the faro bank and the banker, who was busy piling up his gold once more, M. de Horn strode off through the ranks of the spectators, away from the scene of his disaster.

"What a bad idea that was of mine!" said Mille, when he came up

to him. "That Razzetta must have the devil on his side, like all such scamps, and it is folly to attempt to win anything of him; however, I know better bankers than he is, here in this fair, and if you wish to try, we——"

"No use," interrupted Horn. "I have no more money to stake." This was but too true. He had left all he possessed at the gaming-table, but for him to confess this, proud as he was, showed that the loss had wounded him deeply. And, in fact, he found himself in a pitiable plight. Besides not knowing how to live till help should reach him from Flanders, he was forced to renounce his fondest hopes. No money, no house; and, consequently, no interview with the fair marchioness. No revenge, either, for without money how could he take any part in an enterprise which might lead him all the way to Spain after the Regent's post-chaise? The count thought of all this and stormed inwardly. Mille, who guessed his thoughts, undertook, not to console him, but to demonstrate that he ought not to despair, and that there were ways of getting out of a scrape, however bad. "Suppose I go with you to the notary," said he, when they reached the further end of the fair, "perhaps we can manage him if there be two of us."

"You mean by scaring him, don't you?" replied Horn, drily. "No, the scamp is perfectly unmanageable, and I would rather meet a squad of light horse than that clown in a bob-wig. If we threatened him he would summon all the bailiffs in the Châtelet to his aid."

"That would not do the colonel's matters any good, and he is always preaching prudence. We must think of some other way."

"I see none, unless it be to run myself through the body."

"Oh, count! how can you talk like that? Nothing is lost yet, by heaven! and a man of your family cannot be long in trouble for a few thousand pistoles. I am sure that the colonel, for instance, would be happy to lend you the paltry amount which you require to mollify the Cerberus at the gates of the little house at Assières. La Jonquière has free use of the gold sent by the King of Spain, and he need only write to a certain banker of his acquaintance, and——"

"I prefer not to apply to the colonel."

"Why, then, not apply to some nobleman of your house?"

"Not one would help me; they would all refuse, for fear of offending my elder brother."

"The devil! Then I am beginning to feel at a loss. Usurers need guarantees and references, and so on."

"And all I have in clothes and jewels is certainly not worth thirty thousand livres. Let us say no more of it, captain. I will wait for the money from my mother."

The captain then pensively followed his companion. After having silently gone a hundred paces, he smote his forehead and exclaimed: "Count, I think this time that I have a happy thought."

"What is it?" said Horn, rather drily.

"It was that scamp of a Law who brought you to grief; it is his place to repair the losses that ace of hearts caused you. Do you know that between morning and night you may make a fortune with the system invented by that fellow?"

"Deuce take it if I know how to set about things of that sort."

"You only have to buy stock the day before it goes up."

"Who is to tell me, pray, when it will go up?"

"No one is ever perfectly sure of these things, but they are to be guessed at—*felt*, you know. I have often listened to the talk of those 'Mississippians' at Barbe-Blanche's tavern, and I know all about their ways, and I'll venture to say that I could do this gambling as sharply as the best of the band."

"Do you think that stock is going up now?"

"I would take my oath to it! I was in the crowd yesterday, in the Rue Quincampoix, and I heard the big-wigs of the market talk. They all declared that in three days the rate of stocks would be almost doubled."

"You surprise me, captain; I know no more about such matters than the man in the moon. But is it true that when people have got stock, they can really change it into gold?"

"It is as certain as anything can be. There are a hundred brokers in Paris who pay cash for the stock."

"I thought that it was all trickery."

"Trickery! Well, that may be, but it enriches the skilful trickster very quickly."

"Yes," muttered the count, thoughtfully. "That might be a good resource. Luck cannot be always against me, and if I could try it—"

"There!" exclaimed the Piedmontese, triumphantly, "that's right! I was sure that you would see the sense of it."

"But, captain, that is all very well," said Horn, abruptly; "I suppose that to buy stock, I must have money, and you know that I have none."

"Oh, if that is all, you need not distress yourself. Brokers are not as hard to deal with as lawyers, and I know a Jew who is glad to trade with those who, like yourself, offer good security. Father Abraham always has several hundred thousand livres of stock, and when he knows who you are, the matter will be settled in a turn of the hand."

"Explain yourself, I beg. Tell me how things are done."

"In the simplest manner. I'll go and find him, tell him that you wish to buy—say—five hundred certificates, to be delivered and paid for in three days. He did business formerly in Brussels, as it happens, and knows the great wealth of your family. He won't, therefore, make any difficulty about consenting to the bargain, which can be concluded the same evening at the Epée de Bois. On the next day, and the day after that, the stock will go up a hundred, two hundred, or three hundred livres, more or less, but it will go up—of that I am sure. On the third day, Abraham will count you out an enormous sum with his brokerage off, of course."

"But what if, unluckily, the stocks should go down?"

"Then you would owe the amount of the purchase to that son of Israel, and he would have to take it out in waiting."

The count started. He clearly saw that Mille was proposing to him an operation which a gentleman should recoil from, and his good angel whispered to him that he ought to refuse to yield to the tempter. But to ruin him the evil spirit called up the image of Madame de Parabère, and he abruptly exclaimed: "I have made up my mind to do as you advise, but it must be done at once."

"Come to-morrow at nightfall to the Cul-de-Sac de Venise," said Mille; "you will find Abraham there, and I will speak with him before-hand. In less than half-an-hour the matter can be arranged."

"Agreed," said the count, and his good angel flew back to heaven again.

XI.

ON the evening of that day, at dusk, the Chevalier du Terne, whom Lorenzo de Mille accused, not without reason, of neglecting the interests of the conspiracy, was walking alone in the Place Royale. He had for a month past come there regularly at nightfall. The agreement he had made with the daughter of the detective had been kept on both sides, and both came to the appointed place with a regularity which, as a rule, is only customary with lovers. However, between the two who thus punctually met, everything was talked of except love. So far, Heaven had not blessed their efforts to find Violet, and they were no further advanced than on the first day. Vainly had the chevalier shut himself up in a garret which looked out upon the gardens of the Hôpital-Général, where he had great reasons for believing that Violet had been taken. Vainly had he tried to obtain an entrance, either by artifice or money, into the formidable asylum in which beggars, insane persons, and degraded women were all placed together without distinction. The Hôpital-Général — now called La Salpêtrière — was as strictly guarded as a prison. Thus Terne, for a month past, had been losing his time and pains. He began to think that Violet had been buried alive in some dungeon or taken out of Paris. He was reduced to prowling about, and at times he had wandered around the Epée de Bois, which he did not enter for fear of being repulsed by the brutal Blanche-Barbe. His meetings with La Jonquière had gradually grown less frequent, and at such interviews as he had from time to time with the colonel, the latter did not fail to reproach him for his weakness. Terne at last depended upon Gudule alone. The orphan had not, however, succeeded any better than he in her researches, but she was better able to act to some purpose, and was freer in her movements, as no one suspected the daughter of a detective of working against the purposes of the lieutenant of police. Dubois, who had many cares upon his mind, had entirely neglected to carry out the benevolent intentions of the Regent, and Gudule had received no employment, pension, or help from the forgetful minister. But, fortunately, the conscientious notary, Master Crozart, the same who was so obstinate as regarded Count de Horn, had promptly and scrupulously acquitted himself of the mission confided to him by Jean Larfaillé. He had sent for the orphan girl and read the detective's will to her, and told her that out of the twelve thousand livres deposited with him by the man who was thought to be dead, he would give her a yearly allowance of six hundred livres until the deed setting forth his death was properly drawn up, and indeed he gave her, while she was with him, the money for the first term. Gudule did not eat more than a bird; the rent of the house in the Rue du Pont-aux-Choux was paid up to next Michaelmas. With her small income she had all that she needed to live on. Thus freed from material anxieties, she was able to devote herself entirely to the task of delivering Violet.

Almost every day, after her frugal meal, she received a visit from the detective Pillavoine, the friend and successor of Larfaillé in the minister's confidence. Accustomed to respect her when he was under her father's orders, this police-agent continued to show her a respect, mingled with affection, which greatly pleased her, but did not prevent her from adroitly making him talk of his occupation. She derived many precious hints from

him, not as to Violet's fate, for she feared betraying herself by directly approaching that great subject, but as to the measures taken against the conspirators. Thus she learned that these people had suddenly become invisible, but that they were still being persistently watched for, and that there was one on whom it was hoped that they would soon lay hands. Pillavoine did not say upon what this hope was set, but he sometimes mentioned that a means had been found for attracting some one to a certain part of Paris, where it would be easy to entrap and seize him. All this was faithfully reported to Chevalier du Terne, whom Gudule still called "Monsieur Lestang," for he had not thought fit to tell her his real name. They reasoned together as to the information thus gathered, and became almost sure that Violet had been carried off with a view to causing the conspirator who was enamoured of her—that is, Terne in person—to show himself.

Matters were at this point when, on the evening of the day when the Count de Horn lost his money at the Saint-Germain fair, Terne and Gudule met as usual in the Place Royale. The chevalier arrived first, and went towards Gudule as soon as he caught sight of her. "Has anything happened?" said he, eagerly.

"Yes," said the young girl, who seemed more agitated than usual. "I have learnt that you are not safe in the lodgings which you now occupy."

"You have seen the detective again, then, and he has spoken out?"

"He told me this very evening that he was on the road to fortune, for he holds, he says, a clue to the whereabouts of one of the lieutenants of Colonel La Jonquière, and from the description which he gave me of this lieutenant, I saw that he meant you."

"Who has denounced me?" muttered Terne.

"No one, I believe; but Pillavoine learnt by a police report that a young man of good appearance had been living for some weeks near the Hôpital-Général, and passed his time at a window looking out upon the gardens of the place. His suspicions were aroused. He very adroitly inquired about all this, and found out that the young man had no occupation, and only went out at dusk. This is why he has made up his mind to watch the approaches of your lodgings."

"All this is very vague; and a man cannot be arrested for such trivial reasons as these."

"There are other suspicions, Pillavoine told me. He is convinced that this stranger has taken these lodgings in order to help a woman to escape."

"Ah! I had guessed their diabolic plan, then!" exclaimed the chevalier; "and it was really to draw me into a trap that those wretches abducted Violet!"

"I think so also," said Gudule, quietly; "and that is why you must leave that house. It will be better not to go back there to-night, even."

"It would, no doubt, be more prudent; but did the detective who told you all this say nothing about the poor victim of his abominable machinations?"

"Yes; he spoke of her also."

"What did he say to you? Did he tell you anything about Violet?"

"Yes; but, before I speak, promise me that you will not return to the house where you are being spied upon day and night."

"I promise you, Gudule; but speak, I entreat you!"

"Oh, now I will tell you all!" exclaimed the young girl. "It appears

it was the minister who laid the plot for the abduction ; then he had men posted near the Rue Quincampoix, and one evening——”

“ I know all that,” interrupted Terne, who was dying of impatience ; “ where did they take her ? ”

“ To the offices of the Mississippi Company at first ; then on to the prison of the For-l’Evêque, where they tried in every way to make her admit that she knew one of the conspirators, and to obtain from her some information as to his residence. Promises, threats, and ill-treatment were all of no effect, however.”

“ And she suffered all this for my sake ! ” murmured the chevalier, whose eyes were filled with tears.

“ They then thought of a trick,” continued the young girl. “ Suspecting that the landlord of the Epée de Bois kept up secret relations with the conspirators, they let some words fall in his inn with the intention of letting him know that his daughter was at the For-l’Evêque. They thought that he would tell this to his accomplices, and that the one among them who was interested in the imprisoned girl would not fail to show himself in the neighbourhood of the prison.”

“ But the rascal said nothing ? ”

“ It is his silence, perhaps, that saved you, for everything was in readiness for arresting you near the For-l’Evêque, just as all is now prepared for arresting you near the Hôpital-Général.

“ Violet is there, then ? ” said Terne.

“ She has been there for the past three days,” said Gudule ; “ if you go back you will be arrested.”

“ I must, however, go back ! ” muttered the chevalier.

“ Do you mean to break your promise ? ”

“ And you, Gudule, do you really want me to abandon a poor girl, whom you ought to help me to save ? ”

“ Abandon her ! Heaven is my witness that I have no such thought, but——”

“ Well, then, what can be done ? ” said Terne, wringing his hands in despair.

“ I will tell you,” said Gudule, gently. “ In the first place, do you know where Colonel La Jonquière is ? ”

“ He is at the Capuchin Convent, in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques.”

“ Could he give you a shelter ? ”

“ I don’t know. He has passed himself off as a Spanish monk, from the Franciscan Convent at Burgos, and has convinced the prior that he has come to collect alms in France. Could he succeed in making them believe that I also belong to one of the mendicant orders ? It seems difficult to me.”

“ It must be done, however, and it is the only way left for you to escape the detectives. You cannot hire any other room about Paris. A description of you has been circulated, and you will be searched for everywhere except in a convent and in the garb of a monk.”

“ The gown I can procure at Blanche-Barbe’s, where there is still an assortment of disguises for our use ; but then I must speak to that man whom I despise and execrate.”

“ You can choose a time when he is absent, and speak to his wife. As for seeing the colonel——”

“ That is easily managed. He is on the Pont-Neuf every day, a little before sunset.”

"Well, you must seize upon your first chance to-morrow. I will go myself to the Epée de Bois and find out when Dame Blanche-Barbe is alone. All the detectives know me by sight, and if any of them should be there on the look-out for the conspirators, they won't fail to come and speak to me. I can then let you know if there is any danger. As soon as you have put on your Franciscan gown, you can go to meet the colonel on the Pont-Neuf."

"But what shall I do between now and to-morrow?"

"You can remain at my house," said the young girl, courageously, "and the watch will certainly not look for you there."

"Thanks, Gudule," said Terne, "thanks for your devotion, but I cannot accept it. If I hide myself there will be no one to save Violet."

"There will be me," said Gudule, in a low tone.

"You, Gudule! you! How could you save her?"

"Listen to me. My project is all arranged in my own mind, and nothing can deter me from carrying it out. I planned it when I heard Pillavoine tell the sad story of her sorrows, and it is to him that I addressed myself to secure a means of executing it."

"To that man?"

"Yes, for he is the only one who can help me. His employment enables him to have access to the Hôpital-Général, and he has some degree of influence with the steward there for having done him some little service. He has more than once offered to get me some little laundrying to do in the house, and I had always refused, because I had other things to attend to. But I have now accepted the offer, and to-morrow I shall have the right to enter the Hôpital-Général and remain there all day, even enter the rooms where the unfortunate prisoners are all huddled together—"

"Is it possible that I have guessed—?"

"Yes, you have guessed it," interrupted Gudule; "if I have made up my mind to sacrifice my liberty, it is because I am sure of discovering her whom you love, and getting her out of that place."

She had scarcely finished when the chevalier seized both of her hands, and pressed them to his lips. The girl quickly freed herself and said: "Will you consent now to do as I ask?"

"I will do so gladly, Gudule, and how could I fail to obey you who are my good angel, and are saving me from despair?"

"We shall arrange everything, then," resumed the young girl, without allowing her emotion to be seen. "As soon as I know that you can go to the Epée de Bois without danger, I will see Pillavoine at the Hôpital-Général, and, thanks to his friend the manager, I shall be able to get my place. Meantime, you will have got your disguise at Dame Blanche-Barbe's house, and gone to the Pont-Neuf to see the colonel. Through him you must get leave of the prior to make your collection throughout the city."

"La Jonquière will bring it about, I am sure, and as I speak Spanish as well as he, the good fathers won't discover the trick."

"There is nothing, then, to prevent you from coming every day to receive the alms distributed at the door of the Hôpital-Général. In your quality as a foreign monk, begging for a pious work, you will easily obtain access to the manager and the lady-superior, and who knows but that you may be authorised to console the prisoners?"

"And I shall find you there, shall I not, Gudule?"

"Do you doubt that? I shall devote all my time to preparing the

escape ; and when that is effected you must remember your promise, and take me far away from this dreadful city."

"I will keep that promise, Gudule."

"But I must tell you also that I may be forced to change clothes with her. I know that I do not resemble her, but by taking advantage of the darkness the keepers might perhaps be deceived. Then I should say to you : 'Go, go without me and be happy.'"

"No, no, that is too much, Gudule—too great a sacrifice."

"I desire it," replied the girl, in a resolute tone. "And, besides," added she, softly, "what need prevent you, when you have crossed the frontier and are married, from letting me know your retreat, and if you and she are willing, why should I not come to you ? I should then be well repaid for all my trouble."

The night was dark and the Place Royale was lonely. The chevalier du Terne de Grandpré fell at the feet of the detective's daughter. He was almost overcome with joy and emotion, and was deeply touched. Gudule, troubled and almost frightened, exclaimed : "Rise, I beg of you, you frighten me !" Then, as soon as Terne had obeyed, she resumed, with apparent calmness: "Now, you must follow me home. My rooms are the only ones you can safely occupy to-night. To-morrow you can leave to return no more, but to-night there is no other refuge for you."

Terne still hesitated. He did not like flying in this manner from the agents of the lieutenant of police, and yielding without fighting. He thought of the garret window which he must so suddenly abandon—that window at which he had passed so many hours watching the dark prison where Violet was confined. But he promptly threw off the weight of these overwhelming recollections, and said to himself that Gudule was right, and that staring at the prison could do no good. The time for action had come. Besides, he carried his entire fortune about his person. It consisted of a thousand louis in a belt round his waist. Nothing, therefore, obliged him to return to the lodgings which he had been occupying for a month past, as he had nothing there but a few valueless clothes, and not a single paper that could compromise him. As for the somewhat delicate situation in which he was placed by the necessity of accepting the hospitality extended to him by the detective's daughter, he gave no thought to that, for Gudule did not wish to be, nor could be, other than a sister, a friend to "M. Lestang."

"I am ready to follow you," said he to the young girl, "and if we succeed in our efforts it will be to you, you alone, that she and I will owe our happiness. I give you my word as a gentleman that you shall never leave us, let what may happen, but I beg you once more not to imperil yourself for my sake. If it were discovered that you had given me an asylum or favoured Violet's escape, it would cost you your liberty, still I give you my promise that I should leave everything to come to your aid, and rescue you out of the hands of those wretches."

"I know it well," said Gudule, "but Heaven will not suffer me to be punished for having repaired an injustice. Come," she added, "I am not used to returning at a late hour, and the neighbours must not have an opportunity to make remarks."

The chevalier thought it needless to say more, and it was time to go. The residents in the Rue Pont-aux-Choux went to bed early in those days, and the shops were closed when the pair came to them. There was no one about to notice whether Gudule came home alone or not. She ushered

“M. Lestaug” into Larfaillé’s humble dwelling, and gave him the room where the detective had been in the habit of writing out his reports. She pointed out a large and cosy arm-chair, set a light near him, and then hastened away to her own room. To say that the chevalier passed a very quiet night in Larfaillé’s arm-chair would be doing injustice to his heart. He felt too keenly all the gratitude he owed to his young protectress, and spent long hours in restless musing. At dawn he fell asleep, and, as is always the case after great bodily or mental fatigue, he soon sunk into a state of complete stupor. When he awoke it was broad daylight, and his eyes on opening fell upon a clock, which showed the hour to be four. He thought at first that the clock had stopped, but the noise of the pendulum showed that it was going, and he thus discovered that he had slept three quarters of the day away. He could not get over his surprise at this, and was still more amazed when he saw behind him, on a little side-table, a light repast prepared by Gudule. She had placed a note upon a white plate, and he read these words: “I have gone out to prepare everything. I will return to let you out before night.”

“Poor little creature! How kind! how devoted she is!” murmured he.

He soon saw that she had thought of everything. There was fresh water in a large copper basin, fire on the hearth, and writing materials upon a table near by. She had undoubtedly wished to enable him to write to Violet to give her tidings of himself, and was willing to carry the letter to her in person. He saw, besides, that she had shut the outside door in order to keep him from obtrusive visitors. He had just finished his repast, when he heard the key turn in the door. Gudule came in with flushed cheeks and brilliant eyes. Her first words were: “I have seen her!”

“Where was she?” exclaimed Terne.

“In the left wing of the Hôpital-Général. She is alone in her cell, but she goes every day to the court-yard at the hour when the prisoners take their walks. I shall begin my work there to-morrow, and shall be employed in the wash-house on her side of the place; I shall have an opportunity of speaking to her.” The chevalier, wild with joy, ran up to Gudule with open arms, but she repulsed him, and with suppressed emotion said: “I hope now that all will be well. I have just come from the Epée de Bois. The police have not been there for several days, and you run no risk in going there; the master has gone to Saint-Denis to get some beer. He went this morning, and will not return till late in the evening; so Dame Blanche-Barbe told me.”

“Did you talk with her?”

“Yes; and I now know that she loves her daughter, and will do all she can to help us to save her. She expects you at four; you must enter the inn by the Rue Quincampoix, and go straight up the stairs leading to the room on the first floor. There will be no one there at that hour, for the ‘Mississippians’ do not go there till nightfall. Dame Blanche-Barbe will come and join you, and you can speak to her at your ease, but she begs of you not to delay.”

“I will go now,” replied the chevalier, eagerly; “and now I have only to ask you when and where I shall see you again.”

“To-morrow, at the same hour, in front of the King’s Garden” (now the Jardin des Plautes), “for it would be imprudent for us to meet at the door of the Hôpital-Général before you have come to an understanding with the colonel.”

“I will be there.”

“I shall be able to leave the laundry, and I shall perhaps have managed to speak to Violet; but go, in Heaven’s name, for time is flying.”

Terne kissed the orphan’s hand, and said: “To-morrow, Gudule, I shall pray Heaven to watch over and reward you.”

Then he rushed out of the house, for he felt that his emotion was getting the better of him. The open air revived him, and his composure returned. He caught sight of Dame Margot as soon as he came near the inn, and she made him a friendly signal, which meant: “I am alone, and will wait for you upstairs.” Terne, on entering, saw that the stout Flemish serving-maid was not in her mistress’s seat at the counter, but was bustling about among the tables with exemplary zeal. He endeavoured to assume the busy look of a “Mississippian,” and went straight to the staircase, and darted up it four steps at a time. At the Epée de Bois this behaviour on the part of stock buyers was quite the thing, and no one noticed what he did. Violet’s mother was waiting for him. The chevalier had never before entered the room, and was surprised at the mean appearance of this place where millions of money changed hands. It was a low, narrow loft, very badly lighted by a single window, overlooking the Cul-de-sac de Venise, and furnished with a table and a few wooden stools. It was a den, in one word, and seemed as though meant expressly for some shameful or mean action. Terne’s eyes did not at once become accustomed to the dimness of the room, and Dame Margot had to call to him to enable him to find his way to her through the stools scattered about. “Ah! chevalier, how glad I am to see you!” exclaimed the worthy woman. “It is so long since I have had an opportunity of speaking to you without witnesses. When the young girl came just now to tell me that you wished to see me, but feared Pierre’s rudeness, I was delighted, for he went away this very morning, and won’t, I think, be back till late. Besides, I have not seen any suspicious-looking individuals about here for at least two weeks. The watchmen who were prowling about have gone away, and the colonel’s men do not come here any more. You do not run any risk, and——”

“Dame Margot,” interrupted Terne, “I have come to ask you to help me to rescue your daughter.”

“Violet! Do you know where she is? Have you seen her?”

“I have not seen her, but I know where she is.”

“Where have they taken her?”

“To the Hôpital-Général.”

“Oh! that is infamous!” exclaimed the unhappy mother, bursting into tears.

“Yes, base, infamous indeed, and the wretches who did it deserve a thousand deaths; but this is not the time to weep and call down vengeance. I want you to let me into the place where La Jonquière keeps the disguises for his and our use. In order to get into the Hôpital-Général, I must disguise myself, you see, and——”

“Alas!” interrupted Dame Margot, “I cannot satisfy you. Pierre has destroyed all the things!”

“What!” exclaimed Terne, “has he destroyed what the colonel entrusted to his care?”

“Alas! yes,” sighed Dame Margot. “He forced open the drawers and chests, and threw all the clothing and arms which they contained into the fire.”

“Upon my word, this is too much.”

"He did not stop at that. He took down the door which protected the entrance of the secret rooms, so that now all our customers can get in without difficulty. He also plastered up the garden wall, so as to close the secret passage opening into the Cul-de-sac de Venise, which served you so well that night when you escaped from the detectives——"

"But the wretch is betraying us, then?"

"No, for if he denounced you he would seriously compromise himself. But he declares that the colonel's projects are known, that the police have their eyes on our house, and may at any moment give orders to search it from top to bottom, and that it is better to be ready for them."

"These precautions smell of treason a mile off, and when the colonel knows what Master Blanche-Barbe has done——"

"I think that he does know it. He does not come here now, nor do his men; but his lieutenant, M. de Mille, sometimes passes before the door, and says a few words to Pierre; I imagine he must have learnt what has taken place, and have told M. de La Jonquière."

"Misfortune follows me everywhere!" muttered Terne. "I am now obliged to go and buy the disguise which I require, and at the risk of arousing the suspicions of the clothier from whom I purchase it. Really, Dame Margot, your husband behaves very strangely."

"Ah, chevalier, he would never have acted like this if that young nobleman had not been in the conspiracy."

"What young nobleman?"

"Count de Horn," said the good woman, lowering her voice.

"What has Count de Horn to do with all this?" exclaimed Terne. "Blanche-Barbe is a scamp, and I need no further proof of that than his cowardly indifference to his daughter's abduction."

"Alas! it is not indifference he feels towards my poor Violet, but hatred, hatred such as he feels for the young count."

"Not for the same reason, I presume?"

"Not altogether, although the rancour arises from the same cause."

This reply calmed the chevalier, by reminding him of a conversation which he had once had with Dame Margot. "Explain yourself more clearly," said he. "You told me once that Master Pierre formerly had suspicions, jealous suspicions of you, but I do not see what that has to do with Count de Horn."

"No, it was his father——" said Dame Margot, with some embarrassment.

"What! did the deceased Prince de Horn——"

"Before we came to France," interrupted Dame Margot, "we lived on his domains, and it was in order to quit his service that Pierre left Flanders. But the story of my sorrowful past would be too long, and would not interest you at all——"

"You are very much mistaken, Dame Margot; nothing could interest me more, for I love your daughter, and I wish to marry her," said Terne, in a resolute tone.

"You, chevalier!" exclaimed the good woman, flushing with joy; "you, a gentleman as noble as the king, would be willing to ally yourself with poor people like us, and condescend to——"

"Listen to me," said Terne, to curtail these transports, which displeased him; "whatever may be Violet's origin, I swear that she shall be my wife. When the hirelings of Argenson and Dubois carried her off, we were waiting for an opportunity to fly together, and we intended to send for

you to join us as soon as we should be settled in Spain, where we intended to go. But I also swore that Blanche-Barbe should never know what had become of the child whom he had never ceased to persecute from the time she was born. Nothing in my plans is changed. With Heaven's help I shall free Violet, and cross the frontier with her, and you shall come to us. You see that you must tell me the story of this man."

"Well, then, chevalier, I will tell you all. Pierre has not returned, and the 'Mississippians' never come here after sunset. However, everything must be foreseen, and if any one comes in we must not be found together. I will therefore show you a way to go out."

Dame Margot raised an old worn tapestry-hanging at the lower end of the room, and showed Terne that it concealed a very dark and narrow entry.

"In case of alarm," said she, "you must go in there, and while I receive any one who may come in, you must conceal yourself there, unless you prefer to enter the garden by the door there."

"Very well. But tell the story, for Heaven's sake ! I must see the colonel to-night, and I cannot meet him except at a certain hour, which is now near at hand."

"Well, then, chevalier, when I became the wife of Blanche-Barbe, which was eighteen years ago, I was in the service of Princess Antoinette and he was gamekeeper in the forest of Baussignies, which extends far out around the castle belonging to the Horns. It was the dead prince who made the match. He had known me since I was a child, for I was the daughter of one of his tenants, and he was very fond of me. Pierre, also, was born on his lands, and the prince had great esteem for him. If I had been consulted, I should perhaps have refused, for Pierre was thought to be a harsh and high-tempered man : but I was an orphan, and entirely dependent upon my master. Besides, Blanche-Barbe had a position which gave him a good salary, and had already amassed a great deal of money, so that all the girls about the château envied my lot. We lived in a pretty house in the forest, between the château and an old abbey, where there was a 'chapter' of noble dames. The first year of our married life went peaceably by. Toward the beginning of the second, and a few months before Violet's birth, Pierre's disposition suddenly changed. He became dull and gloomy, and passed whole days in the woods, and did not speak to me during the evening. He was jealous."

"But of whom ? You were living alone."

"Of Prince de Horn, chevalier ; and, as he did not dare quarrel with his master, his resentment fell upon me."

"But had the prince given him any reason to—"

"None, unless it be that he went through the forest almost every day to visit a lady, one of his relations, who was a canoness at the Abbey of Overiske, and in passing he often stopped to say a few kind words to me. This was quite enough to create the most unjust suspicions in Pierre's mind. Now, as to Violet, he hated her before she was born, and when she came into the world he cursed her. On the night after her birth she came near dying. Pierre saw her sufferings without being moved in the least ; but I begged so hard that he consented to call in the doctor of Baussignies. It was a winter night, and the village was far away. I remained alone with Violet ; she was asleep in the cradle near the bed in which I lay, ill with a burning fever ; I soon became delirious, and lost all knowledge of what was going on about me. It seemed to me, sometimes, that I heard

my child cry out, and that a man in black was carrying her away in his arms. When I returned to my right mind, Pierre and the village doctor were at my bedside ; they told me that I had nothing to fear on my child's account, and my heart still beats with joy at the remembrance of the happiness I felt at finding her fresh and vigorous, although the evening before I had every moment feared that she would expire before my eyes. Alas ! this happiness did not last long. Nine days later, when I rose, Pierre ordered me to follow him. I took my daughter in my arms and left the house. Two horses awaited us in front of the door. He made me mount one, got upon the other, and, in spite of my prayers and tears, forced me to ride beside him all night long. On the morrow we were in France, and after a week of most painful travelling we reached Paris, where we have been ever since."

"But did Blanche Barbe never tell you the reason for this abrupt departure?"

"Ah, chevalier, he has too often thrown it at me as an insult ! Would you believe that during that fatal night——" At this point Dame Margot suddenly stopped and said in a low tone : "Good heavens ! I think that there is some one coming upstairs !" Footsteps could indeed be heard on the stairs below, and the landlady hastily resumed : "Quick, chevalier, hide yourself ! You must not be seen here."

Then, without waiting for Terne to reply, she pushed him towards the secret entry, and let fall the hangings. Next, taking np the corner of her apron, she began busily wiping the table, trembling lest her brutal husband should appear, returning from his trip to Saint-Denis earlier than he had said he would. She soon took courage, however. The first face that appeared upon the staircase was that of a well-known broker, Abraham the Jew. Behind him came another individual whom Dame Margot knew also, but did not like, Lorenzo de Mille. She made them her best curtsey, and asked what they wished to drink. "Nothing now," replied the Piedmontese, abruptly ; "we have some business to talk over, and I will call you when we wish to refresh ourselves. But a young gentleman, one of our friends, will be here presently ; if he cannot find this staircase, I rely upon you to show it to him."

"How shall I know him ?" asked the wife of Master Blanche-Barbe.

"It is Count de Horn," said the captain, with emphasis. "People of his rank don't usually come to the Epée-de-Bois ; he came here once, however, and I do not suppose that yon have forgotten his face."

"No, no, certainly not," stammered Dame Margot, surprised as well as annoyed.

She had but just been relating a story in which the deceased Prince de Horn played a leading part, and at the moment when her head was full of recollections of the father, the coming of the son was annonnced. "What can he be doing in such company ?" thought the poor woman as she went down the stairs. "Good heavens ! I hope that Pierre will not return too soon."

While she was going back to her counter, Terne, hidden behind the tapestry, was experiencing lively emotions. He had at once recognised Lorenzo de Mille's voice, and distinctly heard the name of M. de Horn mentioned, but he did not know with whom the captain had entered the room, and prudence bade him remain out of sight. He was even greatly tempted to go quietly away, pass round the house by the secret passage, and leave it by crossing the drinking-room, where there were as yet bnt

few persons. He remained, however, hoping that he would later on hear the rest of Dame Margot's story.

The tapestry which hung before him was badly worn, and he easily found a hole to look through. Mille pushed up a stool for the Jew to sit upon, made him a sign to do so, and seated himself in front of him on the opposite side of the table. "Come now, Master Abraham," said he, "do you know that you will presently owe me a very nice little commission? Affairs like that which you are about to conclude with Count de Horn do not offer themselves every day, and it is I who have brought him here."

"Because you could not go to any one else," said the broker, in a sharp, dry tone.

"Why, if you please, could I not?"

"Because I am the only person in all the Rue Quincampoix who can deliver or buy for money down at any hour of day or night a million of livres in stocks."

The captain bit his lip, and eyed Master Abraham in a rather unfriendly way. This stock-dealer did not in the least resemble the other sons of Israel, who lived on the Mississippi, without leaving Paris. Either because fortune had puffed him up, or because it was his natural disposition, he was the most quarrelsome, stiff, and intractable old fellow that could have been found all along the Rue Quincampoix. But he was by far the most wealthy of all the brokers, and the largest speculations almost always passed through his hands, for he was known to pay ready money. Mille, who had had recourse to him for that simple reason, and no other, therefore took good care not to show his anger. "That was a joke, a mere joke," said he, with a forced laugh. "I am a swordsman, and as such I have no wish to make anything out of such matters as I undertake to manage for the sake of my friends."

"You are right," said the Jew, drily. "But let us come to the facts. I have no time to lose, as I have a matter to treat to-night, a bargain to close with the Duke de Bourbon at the Hôtel de Condé. You came to find me, and told me that a certain Count de Horn wished to have a few hundred stocks at once. Well, where is this count? About how many does he want?"

"He will be here presently and will tell you himself. Zounds! here he comes, I believe."

Some one, indeed, was coming up the stairs, and the chevalier, still hidden behind the tapestry, saw Antoine Joseph de Horn come in. The young nobleman was pale, and his eyes, surrounded with dark circles, bore traces of the fatigue and annoyance of the evening before. "Good-day, count," said the captain, in a gay tone; "you have come just in time, for Master Abraham is impatient to end matters. Was it not five hundred certificates that you wished to purchase from this worthy descendant of the Hebrews?"

"Yes," muttered Horn, with a somewhat embarrassed air, "five hundred would suffice, I think, if I may pay for them in three days' time."

The Jew, who till then had contented himself with simply looking at the new-comer, rose at this as though he had been moved by a spring. "Did you bring me here to listen to such stuff as this?" he demanded, addressing the Piedmontese adventurer.

"There, there! calm yourself, Master Abraham," said Lorenzo de Mille. "By the beard of Moses! you flame up like powder; and why? I must ask; because you are asked to give three days' credit to this gentle-

man, who is a count of the Holy Empire, the son of a sovereign prince, and who, as security for five hundred paltry certificates, offers you the lands of Baussignies, Hautekerke, Bailliol, and many others belonging to his mother, without counting——”

“Sir,” said the old man, angrily, “I am not a count of the Holy Empire, nor a land-owning lord, but I have here in my pocket more than a hundred and fifty thousand livres in bank-notes, and about two thousand louis in gold. Do you seriously think that I wish to exchange the smallest part of that for chimerical promises ?”

“What do you mean ?” said the count, furiously.

“Oh, you old rascal !” muttered Mille, rising at once, “you carry a million about with you, and you play the impertinent.”

“I say,” repeated Abraham, forcing his penny-rattle voice to its highest pitch, “I say that I wish to do serious business, and that I am not accustomed to trade with adventurers.”

The words were no sooner uttered than Horn threw himself upon the unlucky broker, shouting : “Retract those words, you miserable Jew ! Ask my pardon, ask it on your knees, or I will kill you !”

The old man, without much alarm, placed himself behind the table to shelter himself from the young nobleman whom he had so imprudently insulted. Lorenzo de Mille, who seemed desirous of remaining neutral, went gradually nearer to him with his head erect, a smile upon his lips, and his hands in the pockets of his doublet. Horn, meantime, kept back by the intervening table, had not been able to proceed to violence, but he was about to draw his sword, and his eyes were blazing with rage. “Sir,” said the Jew, “I scorn your threats, and I warn you that if you do not make way for me I shall call for help !”

“Master Abraham,” said the Piedmontese, between his teeth, “you must pay your ransom if you wish to go free.”

“Ah ! then it appears, my fine gentlemen, that you wish to rob me. That being the case, I will——” But Abraham did not finish what he was attempting to say. The count’s sword, suddenly withdrawn from its sheath, penetrated his throat.

The Jew fell back uttering a cry, a single cry, but a cry of agony, a cry which went through the walls, startling the men who were drinking in the tavern, and stopping the passers-by in the Rue Quincampoix. Lorenzo de Mille did all he could to stifle this awful cry, for he threw himself upon the wounded man, and stabbed him again and again. The vile Piedmontese had expected an act of violence on the count’s part, and had only put his hands in his pocket for a weapon with which to despatch Abraham. His infernal previsions were but too well justified, and he did not hesitate to complete the crime which he had made ready for, but began to rifle the victim. While he was tearing from the bloody garments of the dead man his bank-notes and certificates of stock, Antoine Joseph de Horn, livid, mute, and trembling, looked on at the horrible sight without taking part in the deed, and without preventing it. He did not even think of putting up his sword again, but stood as if turned to stone, still holding his murderous weapon. Meantime a loud noise was heard below, and steps resounded on the staircase. The cry of the dying broker had been heard, and Master Blanche-Barbe’s customers were coming to his help. The count would certainly have waited, without stirring, for them to seize upon his person, but Mille was not new to criminal acts, and knew the way to fly. “Come, count,” said he, running to the window, “we are in a bad plight,

and we must get out of it the best way we can. Let us take that which offers, and get away while these fellows here are mourning over the fate of this ugly Jew."

So saying, he opened the window, stepped out upon the woodwork, and let himself down by some beams which upheld the house, and reached out over the Cul-de-sac de Venise. Horn had completely lost his head, and followed by the same road, without knowing what he was doing. They both got down easily enough, but when they set foot upon the pavement the people in the inn appeared at the windows and pointed them out to the loungers in the street shouting: "Murder! murder! Stop them! stop the assassins!"

Then a desperate race, a fearful chase, began. Mille, holding his infamous spoils to his breast, and leaping along like a stag, and Horn, with his sword in his hand, and rushing like a wild boar through the crowd who tried to stop his way, and behind them a perfect mob howling and hotly pursuing them—such was the sight. The Chevalier du Terne did not see all this, but heard it. He heard the imprecations of those who lifted up the corpse, he heard the outcry made by the "Mississippians" who were pursuing the fugitives. The noise of a distant clamour now became audible, and shouts of triumph announced that the culprits were arrested. This was not the time for the chevalier to trouble himself about them, had he dreamt of doing so, for it was a miracle that no one had thought of looking behind the arras. Terne, if found in his hiding-place, would have run great risk of being cut to pieces or dragged before the police as an accomplice in the murder. He therefore made haste to follow Dame Margot's advice, and, gliding along the secret passage, he rapidly made the round of the house, entered the rooms which the colonel had been wont to use, and went down the once secret stairway, which was such no longer, and found himself in the lower room of the Epée de Bois.

He saw no one there but Dame Margot, who had sunk down near the counter half-dead with fear. The men who had been carousing had all rushed up into the room whence the cries had come. The way was clear, and Terne left the tavern whither his evil star had led him. He had the good luck to find the approaches free. The crowd had all gone towards the offices of the India Company, before which there was an assemblage of idlers, attracted doubtless by the capture of the Jew's murderers. The chevalier was therefore able to cross the Rue Quincampoix unnoticed, and began to run as fast as he could towards the Pont-Neuf.

It was the hour when the colonel in his monk's robes, and mounted upon a jackass laden with heavy wallets, passed by every evening returning to the convent in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, and winking, as he passed, at his faithful confederates, who were scattered about on good King Henri's bridge. Terne could no longer ask him to present him to the Capuchin prior, as he had no gown; but he more than ever wished to speak to him, in order to tell him that he had resolved to devote himself entirely to the deliverance of Violet, and also to inform him of the catastrophe which he had witnessed. He went along with the intention of stopping at the foot of the statue of Henri IV., and waiting for the colonel, who could not be long in appearing. The soldiers of the conspiracy were at their posts, ready to defile one by one before their chief, who, every evening, was thus enabled to review his little army. As usual they were disguised in a hundred different ways, and were utterly unrecognisable by outsiders. Terne soon reached the statue, and took up his position.

There, with his back to the Seine and to the sun, which was now declining, he began to reflect as to the excuse which he would have to make use of in order to accost La Jonquière without attracting attention.

Mendicant friars were not difficult to approach, nor was it surprising that a passer-by should address one, but it was necessary to do so adroitly.

While the chevalier was thinking how to set about it, he espied the colonel in his friar's robes, seated on his jackass, which was ambling slowly along. The old *reiter* had a false beard which covered half his face, and his naked feet in sandals almost touched the ground. Terne was engaged in admiring his skilful make-up, when all at once, to his great surprise, he saw Master Blanche-Barbe, the tavern-keeper, walking along beside the false Capuchin. What meant this chat between them? How was it that Dame Margot's husband was going along the Pont-Neuf instead of returning from Saint-Denis to the *Cul-de-sac de Venise*? Blanche-Barbe was already an object of great suspicion to the chevalier, who, above all things, dreaded to meet him face to face. However, at fifty paces from the statue, the innkeeper bowed politely to the mendicant friar, turned upon his heel, and was soon lost in the crowd. Terne drew a long breath, and he was about to approach when the colonel caught sight of him, and at once spurred up his steed. "Vaya usted con Dios, hijo!" cried he, as soon as the chevalier came up.

This was a flash of light to Terne, who immediately took the hint, and continued the conversation in the language of the Cid, not without some precautions, however, for it would have been imprudent to express one's self too clearly in a crowd of people of every sort; however, he had no difficulty in finding some very sonorous and majestic sentences with a double meaning, such as are spoken beyond the Pyrenees, in that kingdom where the very cobblers are noblemen, and speak nobly. He said that he had come from Burgos, and was delighted to meet a fellow countryman, and ardently desired to accompany the *senor padre* in order to talk to him of "cosas de España." The *padre* courteously replied that he was happy to meet a *hidalgo* from his own province, and was quite ready to talk to him if he would be good enough to follow him to the door of his convent, for it was late, and he had no time to stop. The *hidalgo*, with many thanks, very courteously expressed, then began to walk slowly along with one hand upon the neck of the beast that bore La Jonquière and his wallets.

The loungers on the Pont-Neuf did not understand a word of all this, and there was no suspicion aroused. The colonel and his lieutenant could therefore pursue their way without being observed by any one, and at the Rue Dauphine they turned to the left along the Quai des Augustins, where, at twilight, there were but few passers-by. "I must confess, my dear lad, that you have come just at the very nick of time," exclaimed La Jonquière, when they had reached a lonely corner where they could speak freely. "Do you know what that old lynx of a Blanche-Barbe was telling me? Why, that he is tired of serving us for nothing, and that having made enough to live on without conspiring, he had decided to run away, and finish his precious existence far from Argenson, and all detectives."

"I thought so."

"Wait! that is not all. Without deigning even to let me know, he has burnt all our disguises, opened all the doors of our secret apartments; in a word, has closed his inn against us, and driven us out of his house."

"I knew it all."

"How?"

"I have just come from the Epée de Bois, where Dame Margot told me all ; but, colonel, that is not what is the matter at present."

"What is the matter, then ?"

"Why, Lorenzo de Mille and M. de Horn are at this moment under arrest, and you will never see them again."

"Arrest ? How ? Why ?"

"You would already know if you would allow me to explain. They have killed a Jew, whom they induced to come to the Epée de Bois ; they killed him because he refused to give up to them some certificates of Mississippi stock, and Mille took them from his dead body. The man uttered a cry when expiring ; the people below came up ; they jumped from the window, and were pursued, and arrested at the end of the Rue Quincampoix."

"Who told you this ?"

"I saw it all. I was concealed behind the hangings at the end of the room, and had gone there to ask Blanche-Barbe's wife to get me a monk's gown. I succeeded in escaping by the secret passage, and in crossing the street I heard the shouts of the people who had come to seize the culprits."

"Thanks, chevalier," said the colonel, leaping lightly from the jackass, to Terne's great astonishment ; "thanks ; I must be off, and I bid you good-bye."

"What do you mean ?" said the chevalier, stupefied by this change of tone.

"Nothing can be plainer. I think a vast deal of the King of Spain, but I am a great deal fonder of Colonel La Jonquière, and don't wish his head to be cut off. The conspiracy is all frustrated, through no fault of mine, but I cannot help that, so I'm off. Good-bye, for the game is up ! Philip V. will not have the honour of shutting up his cousin in the tower of Segovia, but I shall have the consolation of saving my head."

"What ! do you despair so easily ? It seemed to me, however—"

"You were wrong. I am an old monkey, and I know what grinning means, and I can see Lorenzo de Mille now exactly as he will look when they put him to torture. To obtain his pardon he will betray us all."

"That is true !" muttered Terne. "A man capable of the base, vile deed which he has just perpetrated would surely betray his associates. If they held merely M. de Horn now—"

"Oh, he is courageous, and has feelings ; he will not confess anything ; and, besides, the Regent will pardon him, for he will not send the son of a sovereign prince to the scaffold—one who is related to himself ; but it will suffice for Mille to be put upon the rack for all of us to be irreversibly ruined. My resolve is taken. I shall decamp, and I advise you to do the same."

"I shall remain, colonel."

"As you please ; but beware of the Bastille and the executioner's axe. You are a nobleman, but you are not of a royal race, and at this very moment, perhaps, heads as noble as your own are being cut off in the public square at Nantes. Talhouët, Pontcallec, Montlouis, Couëdic, and many other noble Bretons will pay with their lives for the trifling wrong they did in conspiring with M. de Cellamare. You would not be any better treated if you were taken. Believe me, you had better go as soon as possible."

"I cannot leave Paris, until—"

"Good ! I guess ! It is on account of the flower-girl of the Rue Quincampoix that you stay. Well, if you end your days upon a scaffold, all hung with black, and with a block in the middle, remember that Colonel La Jonquière gave you good advice."

"It is easier for you to give it than for me to follow it, supposing that I made up my mind to do so," replied Terne, with vexation. "How could I reach the frontier, alone, without any one to help me in tricking Argenson's spies, who will be at my heels ? Paris is the best place for hiding, and I do not wish to leave it."

"Chevalier," said the colonel, after a moment's thought, "I ought not to say more, for a soldier who disgraces himself on account of a woman is not worth one's interest. But I have always had a strange fondness for you, and it shall not be said that I have failed to show you a way to safety. If you will follow me, I will show you a place where we can obtain, this very evening, no less a thing than two excellent horses which will take us quickly, with but ten or twelve halts, to the Bay of Morgat at the end of Brittany. There is a certain Spanish caravel there which awaits the signal of your humble servant to take him on board, and then on to Santander or Bilbao. If you like it will take us both, but make up your mind quickly, for I do not wish that the rising sun should find me in Paris."

"No, it would be cowardly," replied Terne, who was thinking of Violet.

"Good evening, then, chevalier ; I shall pray Heaven for your soul's repose !" called out La Jonquière ; and, giving his jackass a kick to make it start off, the indomitable partisan raised his gown in order to run the better, and fled as fast as he could go in the direction of the Pont-Neuf.

XII.

ON the morrow, towards three in the afternoon, Terne, who had wandered almost all night about Paris, was waiting upon the deserted bank of the Seine, pending the time when he was to meet Gudule in front of the King's Garden. He was worn out with fatigue, and had thrown himself down upon the river-side, at the point where the Seine is now spanned by the Pont d Austerlitz. Chance had brought him there a little before dawn, and he had fallen asleep upon the damp ground with a stone for his pillow.

He was beginning a kind of life which he must, perhaps, continue until he had effected Violet's rescue, for he had now no asylum. He was reduced to sleeping in the open-air, and eating in the meanest taverns, besides flying from the frequented streets, and hiding in the most remote parts of Paris.

The prospect of all this, which would have terrified many, did not greatly disturb him. He was hardened against suffering, and he had about him a sum sufficient to pay his way, and his more than plain attire enabled him to go about without attracting attention. He might thus for a long time stroll about the city under the very eyes of the detectives, who, since Larfaillé had disappeared, had but a very vague knowledge of his person. However, he must carefully avoid all bad encounters, and consequently not show himself near the Hôpital-Général, where he was being looked for. But, apart from all this, the chevalier had terrible

anxieties. La Jonquière would certainly not have helped him in rescuing Violet; but when Terne had once found and delivered her, he, the colonel, would have granted indirect help. He was a man of resource, and had large means and unknown helpers. Through him horses might have been obtained, and safe sleeping-places indicated on the route to the frontier. However, La Jonquière had gone, and was now on the road to Brittany. With that suddenness which was one of his characteristics, he had given up a project which he believed to be lost, and was going to seek other adventures under other skies. Little cared he for a man like Terne, stupid enough to sacrifice his ambition and life for a love affair. As for the soldiers of the conspiracy, the swaggerers devoted to their pay, who met every evening on the Pont-Neuf, it looked as though the colonel had found means of secretly instructing them to disperse, and as though they had profited by the permission to take up more or less suspicious pursuits. There was now nothing to prevent some of them from going over entirely to the lieutenant of police. And it was the abominable murder at the Epée de Bois which had upset everything, which had frustrated the best-laid schemes, and which would perhaps lead a poor innocent girl to death from sheer despair. Terne cursed the infamous Piedmontese adventurer who had killed the Jew, but he could not help pitying his unfortunate accomplice, the Count de Horn, so young, so handsome, and so brave, whom an unworthy weakness had doubtless led to such degradation. Terne almost reproached himself with having indirectly contributed to his ruin by encouraging him to mix in the conspiracy, which, to his destruction, had placed him in relationship with Lorenzo de Mille. At the same time he remembered that M. de Horn had generously drawn his sword to help him to defend Violet from the detectives, and moreover, the strange story told by Dame Margot had constantly returned to his mind, and although the suspicions of the clown Blanche-Barbe had not seemed to him to have any foundation, he could not help being struck by the strange coincidence which seemed to attach Violet to Horn's family, as it were, at least by the circumstance of her having been born on the domains of the late prince.

While Terne was pondering over all this, the sound of footsteps made him raise his head.

He saw a man coming towards him—a man who was running along the shore and gesticulating like a maniac, stopping from time to time to look at the river, as though he was about to throw himself into it. Whether he was, indeed, looking for a place to drown himself, did not, however, interest Terne, who rose to go away. But at this moment the promenader caught sight of him, and ran towards him exclaiming : "What ! is it you, sir ? Ah ! it is Heaven sent you to me."

The chevalier, in surprise, drew back, and was on the point of taking to his heels to get rid of the individual before him, whom he did not remember ever having seen before. But he recollects that a man who runs away is everywhere regarded with suspicion, and that passers-by might see him running and pursue him. Now, he had every reason to avoid making a stir, and rather than incur the risk of doing so, it would be much better to wait quietly for the stranger. "You are the Chevalier de Grandpré," said the latter, as he came up. "Is it possible that you do not remember me, sir ? I saw you but once, but have never forgotten your face."

Terne looked very earnestly at the person whose memory seemed to be

so good. He was a man of forty, of somewhat robust figure, dressed in a grey coat which was very shabby. His hair was light, his face full and ruddy, and he had a mild expression with the discreet look of one of those valets called *grisons* at the time, whom their masters made use of for confidential affairs. "I am Liévin, the Count de Horn's servant," he said, hastily. "You were with him last month, when I brought him a letter at the corner of the Rue Dauphine."

"I remember you now," said the chevalier, whose face lighted up; "but what are you doing here?"

"Ah, sir, do not ask me—I do not know myself. I have been running about like a madman ever since my poor master's mishap."

"He is arrested, is he not?"

"You knew it, then?"

"All Paris knows it," replied Terne, evasively, and not wishing to explain himself further.

"Alas! it must be so, after such an occurrence; but I am glad that every one should know it—everybody will interest themselves in him, and he must be set free."

"Where is he?" asked Terne, shaking his head with a look of sadness, for he was far from entertaining Liévin's opinion as regarded the feelings of the Parisian public.

"At the Conciergerie, sir, in a dungeon, with irons upon his hands and feet, and, what is worse, upon the same bed of straw as that rascally Piedmontese who is the cause of all."

"You have seen the count in his prison, then?"

"I was not so fortunate, and I even came near being sent to the Châtelet prison when I went to ask the judge's permission to see my master. Would you believe it, sir, they tormented me for two hours to make me tell them all I knew about him and the people who frequented his society?"

"What did you say to them?" asked Terne, eagerly.

"I told them the truth, sir. I said that my master was not in the habit of seeing anybody regularly, that he only thought of amusing himself, and that if he had not met that accursed Italian in some tavern, he would not have met with this dreadful adventure."

The chevalier drew a long breath of relief. It was evident that the Count de Horn's servant was a man to be trusted. "Do people know how this unfortunate murder was committed?" asked Terne. No one knew better than he, but he did not wish to confide altogether in Liévin, and had a vital interest in finding out what was being said in the city.

"It seems," said Liévin, dejectedly, "that the count had no money the night before, having lost everything at the Saint-Germain fair. Then, that diabolical Piedmontese proposed to him to buy stock on credit. My master accepted. Oh! he might well do that, for he is rich, very rich; the proof of it is that the princess, his mother, sent him a few days ago a very large sum by a gentleman of her family, who, alas! did not reach Paris till this morning."

"Yes, I heard of all that; but what took place at the tavern?"

"The Jew who was to let him have those paltry bits of paper demanded payment on the instant, and then insulted my master. The count is very high-tempered, and he could not restrain his anger. He gave the man a sword-thrust. Then the Piedmontese despatched the Jew and rifled his pockets. People came in, who had heard the Jew cry out,

and they—my master and the Italian—jumped from the window ; they were followed and arrested in the Rue Quincampoix."

Terne felt a great weight lifted from his mind. He had feared that the facts had been altered, or that the police had refused to believe them, and would then have been greatly troubled, as he had witnessed the whole of the frightful affair. How could he have borne witness, however, without exposing himself to arrest, though, on the other hand, how could he deprive the Count de Horn of testimony which might save him. Liévin, by telling him that the true version as to the murder was not disputed, set his mind at rest. "But he is innocent, sir," resumed the faithful servant—"as innocent as a babe. Heaven will not suffer him to be condemned ; and, besides, he has friends—powerful friends ; they are now, in every way, trying to induce the Regent not to allow a poor lad of twenty-two to be prosecuted. The Duke of Orleans will not allow his cousin to be disgraced, for the count is his cousin, and even a cousin not far removed, through his mother, who is a princess-palatine." At any other time Terne would have smiled at the simplicity of the valet. "Just fancy, sir," resumed Liévin, "that, as early as yesterday evening, the bowmen* came suddenly down upon the Hôtel de Flandre, where we were lodging, in the Rue Dauphine. They overturned everything in the count's rooms, carried off everything, too, and I had to go with them before a commissary, who treated me as I told you."

"But what did they find out from M. de Horn's papers ?" asked the chevalier, anxiously.

"Nothing, sir ; they were only love-letters. The count was a great favourite with the ladies, unfortunately, for it was perhaps that which led to his ruin."

"And what about his acquaintance with the Piedmontese ?"

"There was nothing in writing, sir. Oh, you need not be afraid that there is anything about the conspiracy. The count had a little to do with it at one time, but very little."

"You know about it, then ?"

"All about it, sir. I went with my master to the Vanves plains one night when we waited for the Regent, at the bottom of a quarry. But no one, outside ourselves, knows of that. I and the count went alone, and met no one except a man who won't boast of it, for we saved his life. It was the Paris executioner."

"The Paris executioner !" exclaimed Terne, in astonishment ; "and what was he doing there at such an hour ?"

"I never knew exactly. He told us a long story about some brigands who had arrested him, as they wished to give themselves the satisfaction of executing the executioner. What is certain is that we rid him of two of the rascals who held him, that he owes us gratitude, and if—which Heaven forbid !—my master were sentenced, I shall go to Master Sanson and remind him of his promise. I am sure that he will help me to effect the count's escape."

"It is to be hoped that you will not be reduced to that extremity," exclaimed the chevalier, in surprise, "but I tremble lest Lorenz de Mille should speak out. That man must be a coward, and to save his life he may make revelations."

* The Parisian guards were called archers and bowmen long after they had ceased to carry bows and arrows.—TRANS.

"I think he will be silent in the hope that Colonel La Jonquièrc will do all he can to deliver him; and, indeed, I have already had a secret message delivered to him that will keep up his spirits."

"You thought of that?"

"Yes, indeed," said Liévin, quietly. "I thought of that and of many other things. As soon as I had done with the commissary I went to the Duke de Croi d'Havré, who is nearly related to the count, and told him all that had happened. He at once sent for the Marquis de Créquy and the Prince de Courtenay, who are the count's cousins also, and these gentlemen deliberated about going together to the Regent to demonstrate to him that this suit could not proceed without seriously injuring the rights and the honour of the nobility of the Holy Empire, to which my master belongs."

"Well, then, Philip will give way, and the count will get off with an order to leave the kingdom."

"That is what I hope; but if, by mischance, they dare to try and sentence him, I shall endeavour to save him, and I hope, sir, that you will help me——"

"If I could serve you I would do so willingly, but I am no longer free to act as I please. I am reduced to hiding myself in dark corners and places like this deserted shore, where, by a providential chance, we have just met."

"What! you too, sir! You are in danger? But the colonel won't let you remain in that condition; he has a long arm, my master told me, and as long as he is at the head of the conspiracy——"

"There is no conspiracy now. The colonel left Paris last night, and his men have dispersed."

"Ah, sir, what do you tell me? Fortunately, the Piedmontese won't learn in prison that there is no hope for him in that direction. But you, my master's companion and friend, you cannot remain in Paris alone, without any help, exposed to the searches of the lieutenant of police and the vengeance of the minister. You must fly and leave France with us——"

"What do you mean?"

"That the count will be set at liberty, or that, with the aid of those who interest themselves in him, I will rescue him from the clutches of his persecutors. In either case he will soon reach Flanders, and we will take you with us."

"Thanks, my friend," said Terne, touched to the heart; "thanks for your generous offer which M. de Horn would also make me, no doubt, if he were free; but I cannot accept it, for I have sworn to rescue a young girl whom my enemies and your master's have thrown into prison."

"Then, chevalier, I must place myself at your service as soon as I have saved my master. Might I now ask you who this person is who interests you so greatly?"

"A poor girl who is neither rich nor noble, and who by a capricious chance is the child of the landlord of the Epée de Bois; she is Blanche-Barbe's daughter."

"Blanche-Barbe, did you say? Pierre Blanche-Barbe, who was formerly keeper of the forest of Baussignies, and who came to Paris sixteen or seventeen years ago?"

"That is the man. Do you know the girl?"

"Certainly. Good heavens! what a fatality! my master often spoke to me of the pretty flower-girl you love; but he never told me the name

of this man Blanche-Barbe, which would have at once brought back recollections which——”

“What recollections do you mean?”

“Very distant ones. The count himself does not know this story, but I will tell it to you later on. The young girl whom you wish to rescue is really the girl whom Pierre and his wife have brought up as theirs?”

“Of course.”

“Then, chevalier, I swear to you that we will get her out of her prison, or I will perish in the attempt. But give me four days, which I shall require to get my master out of his difficulties; next Tuesday, the 26th of March, be at this spot a little after sunset; I will be here, and I will tell you all. If you need any money to bribe the jailers, I will give it to you, or if you want horses to reach the frontier, I will procure them for you.”

“Thanks! But, what do you know of this girl’s origin?”

“Listen!” exclaimed Liévin, instead of replying to Terne’s question; “I hear four o’clock striking, and at five I must be at the Hôtel d’Havré to hear from the duke what the Regent has replied to the request of the noblemen. So farewell, chevalier, till Tuesday evening. I will be here, no matter what may happen!”

The chevalier let Liévin go, though he longed to question him further. This man evidently knew all about the mystery which Dame Margot had given him a glimpse of; but it seemed as though fatality interfered to prevent those who knew the story from completing their explanations of it. It was now nearly time for the chevalier to meet Gudule in front of the main entrance of the King’s Garden, and he took good care not to miss this rendezvous which would perhaps decide his fate. The detective’s daughter was awaiting him, seated on a corner-stone at the end of the Rue Saint-Victor. She rose as soon as she saw him, and came towards him with a deliberate step. There was unusual brilliancy in her eyes, and her mild features wore an expression of resolution that almost amounted to exultation. She held in her hand a few poor little flowers, such as grow by chance between the stones of walls or near deserted graves. The chevalier could not help remembering the fresh bunches of violets that the dear captive had formerly scattered about on her way, selling them to one and another as she went along with a smile upon her lips, joy in her heart, and happiness in her face; and, in spite of all his efforts to greet Gudule cheerfully and pleasantly, his countenance grew sad. “Alas! my poor girl,” said he, “I bring you sad news. I have not been able to procure a disguise, you see, for that scamp at the Epée de Bois thought fit to burn our costumes and to close his house against us. He has deserted us; and, besides, a crime was committed yesterday at his tavern, and two of our men were arrested for it. Thereupon our leader became alarmed, and, giving up the conspiracy, left Paris, it is to be presumed, last night. I am now alone, without aid or shelter, and left to my own resources; there is no help to be hoped for from the colonel, and no refuge to be found at the Capuchin convent.”

“Heaven be praised! you need run no more risks, as you are no longer a conspirator,” exclaimed Gudule.

“What does it matter whether I attempt anything against the Regent or not? Do you think that I should expose myself any the less by wresting Violet from her persecutors, or do you think that I have given up any thought of rescuing her?”

"She will be free at this hour, in three days from now."

"Free! Violet free? It is impossible. And yet, you would not have the cruelty to trifle with me. But have I heard aright?"

"All is ready, and everything is arranged. I was on service to-day in the gardens, and early in the morning I saw her and talked to her for a long time."

"Ah, Heaven! She suffers and weeps, does she not?"

"She is full of hope and courage, for she is always thinking of you, and she now knows that we are acting in concert," said Gudule, bending down her head, perhaps to conceal the fact that she now turned pale. The generous girl had guessed that the chevalier was dying to know whether Violet had spoken of him, but he did not like to ask. "Listen to me," she resumed, "and remember what I say, for this is the last interview we shall have here. I shall not be able to return here, and cannot offer you a shelter while you still remain in Paris. I do not like to have you wander about the city, but that is better than trusting to chance. This trial will not last long."

"When will it end?" asked Terne, quickly.

"On Tuesday clean linen is given to the prisoners, and I already told you that I was charged with the duty of waiting on the left wing, where the cell occupied by—" She hesitated a moment, as she always did before uttering Violet's name, and then resumed in an uncertain voice: "Tuesday evening, then, I shall go in at the usual hour; I shall be alone, for the steward and lady superior have confidence in me, and allow me to come and go all over the house, and even to go out without removing this black veil which I have worn ever since my father died. Well," she added, "we only need a few moments to change clothes with one another. We are of about the same height. I have told her what way to take to reach the main door. Besides, no one will think of speaking to her, nor be surprised at her appearing at the grating with her face covered, for they have seen me pass with a veil on for several days past. In front of the railing, on the opposite side of the boulevard, at the corner of the horse-market, there is a group of three trees which will screen you from prying eyes. Be there on Tuesday evening, and, when six o'clock strikes, you will see a woman come out dressed as I am. She will pass near you without speaking, and cross the market. You must follow and join her, and when you are sure that it is she, my work will be done and yours will begin."

"But what will become of you, Gudule?" exclaimed Terne.

"I," replied the girl, with a sad, sweet smile, "will pray Heaven for you in the cell, where I shall remain shut up till the morrow at noon, and then alone will the change of persons be discovered."

"But the wretches will find fault with you, my poor girl, and who knows what they may do to you for your sublime devotion?"

"What can they do to the daughter of a detective who died in the service of the King?" demanded Gudule, raising her blue eyes to the chevalier's face. "I run no risk, or rather only that of being sent away from the Hôpital-Général. I shall then return to my father's house, and wait till you keep your promise. Ah! I know that I shall suffer cruel anguish, and that the hours will seem very long to me till I learn by letter that you have passed the frontier."

Terne was silent. He scarcely even dared to look into the limpid eyes of the noble young girl who thus sacrificed even her love, that love formed

of resignation and innocence, and of which he now could see the greatness. Pale, trembling, and downcast, he sought for words to express what he felt, and, in spite of himself, his eyes rested upon the flowers which Gudule held, and which he thought that Violet's hand had perhaps touched.

"Take them," said Gudule, placing in his hands the little sprigs of wild primrose taken from between the flagstones ; "she picked them for you ; you will soon be able to give them back to her, but keep one in remembrance of me." Then the girl hastened away without giving the chevalier time to reply.

XIII.

IN the eighteenth century a civil lawsuit was often handed down from one generation to another ; but, on the other hand, a criminal process went on with frightful rapidity. Never was an affair hurried on more than that of the Count de Horn. The Jew had been murdered on Friday, March 22nd, 1720, between five and six in the evening, and the guilty parties, on being arrested, were at once interrogated by a magistrate, and imprisoned in the Conciergerie. The following Saturday and Sunday sufficed for the reporting counsellor to make his inquiry, and the Criminal Chamber of the Court of Parliament, the Tournelle, as it was then called, met on Monday, the 25th, to try the two culprits. While the judges were deliberating, Philip of Orleans, Regent of France, was being subjected, in his private apartments, to entreaties which sorely tried his moral strength. The prince was naturally gentle and humane ; he had a horror of extreme measures, willingly forgave injuries, and took pleasure in granting pardon to an enemy. But he also had a strong sense of justice, and considered that punishment should be meted out to one and all in the same way. From these two opposite tendencies very painful struggles took place in his mind, and the conflicting influences around him did but add to his perplexities. He had at last shut himself up in his study, and Coche, his valet, had received orders to prevent any of those who were soliciting him from entering. In the morning Philip had received the Duke de Saint-Simon, a member of the Council of the Regency, and his own intimate friend. This great nobleman, who had a lofty mind, and who has left us such inimitable memoirs, had advised firm and full punishment, without any consideration for the birth and standing of the culprit. "Whoever," said he to the Duke of Orleans, "asks you to give the Count de Horn his life after so detestable a crime, is only thinking of the Horn family, and is not true to you." It was right, according to him, to let the Parliament try and sentence Horn, even to the wheel. But it was fitting, after the sentence had been pronounced, not to prevent its execution, but to modify it. The Horns were princes of the Empire. Now, in the Netherlands and in Germany to be broken on the wheel was considered so disgraceful that the brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and descendants of the condemned man, down to the third generation, were deprived of the right of entering any noble chapter. Decapitation, however, did not bring with it any of those consequences which made an entire race responsible for a crime committed by some individual member of it. Now Saint-Simon thought it would be wrong to bring disgrace into an illustrious family in that way, and suggested that the Regent, as soon as the sentence was pronounced, should sign a commutation of the penalty, and that the count should simply

be decapitated. The Regent had promised to pursue this more moderate course, and M. de Saint-Simon had gone away, glad at having been able to conciliate two things which he loved equally well, justice and the privileges of the nobility.

The Regent was walking up and down his study, pacing from his writing-desk to the window, and from the window to the door, which opened from time to time to allow Coche to pop in his head to ask for an audience for some one or other, a request which was invariably met by a prompt refusal, when suddenly the valet entered to hand the duke a paper which was covered with writing. "A petition, monseigneur," said Coche.

"For Count de Horn's life, is it not? I have nothing to do with it."

"It is signed by all his relatives, monseigneur, and they brought it here after having made an application with all due ceremony at the Palais de Justice. These noblemen, fifty-seven in number, all of the first families in the kingdom, went to the Salle des Pas Perdus when the gentlemen of the Tournelle were going to try the count."

"What do you mean? Did they dare to insult the Parliament, or attempt to influence it?"

"No, monseigneur, they contented themselves with standing there while the counsellors passed, and bowing respectfully to them."

"Even this mute entreaty was too much. Leave me and allow no one to enter."

Coche retired on tip-toe, and the Regent once more began to walk up and down the room. He had a great mind not to look at the petition, of which he thought that he knew the contents beforehand, but his eyes fell upon the first lines, and he read on as follows:—"Monseigneur, the faithful subjects of his Majesty, whose names follow, humbly beg leave to state to your Royal Highness: First, that Prince Ferdinand de Ligne and Ambise, the uncle, on the mother's side, of Count Antoine Joseph de Horn, at present confined in the Conciergerie, has been legally placed under interdict on account of insanity since the year 1717. Secondly, that the father of the dowager Princess de Horn, the grandfather of the said Antoine Joseph, lost his mind three years before his death."—"What do they propose to gain by all this?" said the Regent, "and what is it to me whether this uncle and grandfather were crazy or not?" And his astonishment was natural enough, for, at that time, these judiciary pleas, now so much abused, had never yet been made use of, and the trial of Count de Horn is probably the first in which the influence of hereditary madness was brought forward as an excuse for crime. The petition proceeded as follows:—"Thirdly, that Count Ambroise de Horn, Grand Forester of France and Artois, uncle of the said Antoine Joseph, has been in confinement since he was seventeen years old, having then, in an attack of insanity, killed Madame Agnes Brigitte de Créquy, his wife. The sovereign courts of Flanders and Brabant did not consider that he was amenable to any law except that of interdiction. However, the said Count Ambroise de Horn having escaped from the Château de Loozen, where he had been confined, met two Capuchins from Ruremonde, whom he began to beat in a furious manner to make them deny God. He was armed at the time with four pistols, which he had snatched from passers-by. One of the monks, terrified by the violence of the unfortunate count, was weak enough to utter some blasphemous words, whereupon the count blew out his brains, saying that he was a miserable apostate whom he did

right in sending to the devil. The other monk, who was firm, was none the less shot by him, for the madman declared that he would go straight to paradise, and that he thus made him a martyr of the faith."—"Oho!" exclaimed the Regent, pausing in his perusal, "this Grand Forester was an abominable scoundrel. Like uncle, like nephew, it seems to me, and if all these Horns are of my mother's family, it must be confessed that I have a nice set of relations. I will go on to the end, although I can guess the conclusion."—"Fourthly, that Count Antoine Joseph de Horn, the grandson and nephew of the aforesaid persons, was himself attacked with a malady which the physicians of Brabant and the judiciary authorities of the Austrian Netherlands certified as having all the characteristics of mental derangement. Fifthly, that the undersigned do not wish to enter into any discussion as to the cause and form of the suit against Count Antoine Joseph, but reserve to themselves the right of using all reasonable means to obtain justice in favour of their relative. For these reasons, may it please your Royal Highness to obtain from the King, our sovereign master, a full and entire remission of the sentence which may be pronounced against the said Count Antoine Joseph by the Tournelle Court."

"And this is signed by the greatest names among the French nobility!" cried Philip, letting the petition fall. "They wish me to pardon a man who has committed the most vile and cowardly of crimes! He is crazy, they say. Very well! I maintain that this madness of his cannot be cured anywhere but in the Place de Grève, with the executioner as a doctor."

"The Grève! the executioner! what a horrible idea! Do not say that, Philip, do not say that, if you love me!" murmured a sweet voice which suddenly reached the Regent's ear, and at the same time a soft hand was laid over his mouth.

The Regent turned quickly round, and found himself face to face with Madame de Parabère. That sparkling brunette, the marchioness, the irresistible charmer who had violated the orders of non-admittance, all through Coche, who could refuse her nothing, had come in on tip-toe and thrown her arms round the neck of Philip, who was absorbed in gloomy thoughts. "The devil, marchioness! this is going too far," said he. "You know very well that after six in the evening I shall be free to see you and our friends, but meanwhile I must attend to serious matters."

"Fie! fie! Philip! don't speak like that, or I shall cease to think you the amiable and gallant gentleman that you are. You seem very much put out."

"Marchioness, I repeat——"

"Pretty matters, upon my word! When I came in you were discoursing all by yourself about the Grève and the executioner. I'll venture to say that it was all about that poor Count-de Horn."

"What if it was?" exclaimed the duke, impatiently; "have you come to meddle in that affair?"

"Why not?" said Madame de Parabère, in her softest voice. "The Court and city talk of nothing else; and the unfortunate man is so young."

"You are going to pity him, are you? I suppose that the next thing you'll do will be to ask me to pardon him."

"And if I did, Philip? If I asked you to pity him——"

"Madame," replied the Regent, whose face was becoming perceptibly sterner, "I have told you a hundred times that I do not allow women to interfere in the government of the kingdom; still less will I tolerate

anything of the kind in a criminal case ; and as to the particular one that brings you here, you astonish me greatly by attempting to take M. de Horn's part with me."

"What, really !" said the marchioness, with a peal of laughter, "are you jealous ? Do you know that I should be very much flattered if that were the case."

"What do you mean by jealous, madame, and what nonsense are you attributing to me ?"

"There ! there ! now don't be angry, Philip, people are only jealous when they love. And, come now, with your hand on your heart, can you say that you are not still thinking of the scene which you had in the box at the opera with this young madman, and that this recollection does not influence you ?"

"And you, madame," said the duke, whose self-love was wounded, "must you not think me a perfect fool to——"

"I think you the most noble and generous of men, Philip, and it is to your heart that I appeal when I beg of you to pardon this unfortunate fellow, whose age and birth entitle him to some pity."

"His age and birth ! These are pretty reasons for asking me to commit an injustice ! I tell you, marchioness, that if you have nothing better to bring forward——"

"I have—I have something else, and I am sure that you will take it into consideration. Indeed, I am surprised that you have not guessed what it is."

"I have no turn for guessing riddles."

"Well, do you remember that we once went together to the Théâtre Francais to see one of Corneille's tragedies, in which there is a certain Roman, Cinna, who conspires against his prince, his benefactor, Augustus ?"

"Well, what of it ?"

"Well, Augustus made this Cinna sit down, reminded him that he had loaded him with favours, reproached him mildly with having conspired against his authority and person, and finally held out his hand to him, saying—you must help me to remember the words——"

"Let us be friends, Cinna ; 'tis all I ask of you," recited the duke.

"That is it, Philip, and I know that, like me, you admire this sublime instance of clemency."

"I understand you now. But, my dear marchioness, I advise you to study Roman history before you quote from it. In the first place, I do not resemble Augustus, who was an ambitious man and a hypocrite ; and, more than that, what is there in M. de Horn's case at all like that of Cinna's ? Cinna was a conspirator, but he never, that I heard of, killed a poor devil of a Jew to rob him of his money."

"Monseigneur," said Madame de Parabère, gravely, "it is in his virtues that you resemble Augustus. Like him you forgive those who offend you."

"That would be all very well if the count had harmed no one but me."

"What does it matter what he did in a fit of madness ? It is enough that he publicly insulted you, and challenged you before twenty people, for you to be called upon to pardon him. I do not wish that it should be said that the Duke of Orleans revenged himself upon Count de Horn, by letting him die upon the scaffold."

"Who would say such a thing ?"

"All Paris, monseigneur, all Paris ; for the story of the quarrel at the

opera ball is well known, and people say that M. de Horn was my lover, and that his death would rid you of a rival. Your enemies—and you have many—go about saying in Court and city, that after refusing satisfaction to a nobleman who is related to you, you are trying to disgrace him by this infamous punishment."

"But this is odious! frightful!" exclaimed the Duke of Orleans; "and if I could believe that I might be accused of such low feelings as these, seriously accused of such cowardice, I——"

"If you could believe it, if I proved it to you, what would you do, monseigneur?"

"I would send that young madman back to his family, whom may Heaven confound for ever letting him come into this kingdom!"

"Ah, monseigneur, I see now that you are yourself, my great, my noble, my generous Philip!" exclaimed Madaine de Parabère. And darting to the door of the study, she opened it and said aloud: "Come in, gentlemen, our cause is gained!"

The wily marchioness was quite mistaken, however. The pardon of the criminal, which she had so skilfully succeeded in obtaining—in a manner—escaped her because she proclaimed it too quickly. In appealing to the heart of Philip of Orleans, she had done well; but in trying to get the better of the Regent, she had done wrongly. Her little plot with the relatives of Count de Horn spoiled everything. Coche, the valet, was in this plot, and, in quietly letting the marchioness into the study, he had at the same time hidden a deputation—chosen from among the signers of the petition—behind the door. On being summoned by Madame de Parabère, the Duke d'Havré, the Marquis de Créquy, and the Prince de Courtenay entered. At the sight of these noblemen the Duke of Orleans became another man. He went up to the marchioness, took her hand, and conducted her to the door with a show of respect which did not deceive Madame de Parabère in the least. She felt that M. de Horn was lost, since the duke dismissed her. When the Regent went back to the count's noble relatives he addressed them proudly, saying: "I know what brings you, gentlemen;" and as he spoke his manner would not have discredited his uncle, Louis XIV.; "you have come to ask me to pardon the Count de Horn."

"Yes, monseigneur," replied M. de Créquy, "and we hope as much from your Highness's sense of justice as his clemency."

"I regret, gentlemen, to refuse," replied the Duke of Orleans, "but I have taken an oath that the laws of the kingdom shall be respected; the justice of which you speak must be the same for all, and my duty forbids me to pardon this great criminal."

"My lord, remember the disgrace which this execution will bring upon the noblest families of France and Europe."

"The disgrace is in the crime, not in the punishment."

"My lord, the house of Horn, to which we all belong, is also allied to your own, and to its honour——"

"Very well, gentlemen," said the Regent, with incomparable dignity, "I shall share the disgrace with you." Then he dismissed them with so regal a gesture that the abashed noblemen hung their heads and went out without daring to say a single word. They had no sooner left the study than Philip threw himself into an arm-chair and rang for his valet, Coche, who appeared, trembling with fear. "Come here, you rascal!" cried the duke: "what do you mean by disobeying my orders?"

“Monseigneur,” stammered the unlucky valet, “it was the fault of the marchioness; she assured me——”

“Let the marchioness alone, and remember this: I consent to pardon you this time on account of your past services; but if you ever again allow any one to enter my study without my permission, I shall dismiss you. Now, where did Madame de Parabère go when she left here?”

“She went down the stairs as fast as she could, and jumped into her carriage, which was waiting for her in the Rue de Valois. A man got into it, also, a kind of lackey in a brown livery, who was with her when she arrived, and who has been with her all the time, they say, for the last two days.”

“Some agent of the house of Horn, no doubt. Well, now go and fetch Dubois to me.”

“The minister is in the ante-room, monseigneur, with M. Law.”

Coche, enchanted at getting off so easily, hurried away, and an instant later the door of the study again opened to admit Law, looking cold and haughty as usual, and Dubois, who, contrary to custom, had a smiling face.

“Well!” exclaimed the Regent, “you saw who went out of this room just now, and I think their faces told how I received them?”

“Yes, yes,” stuttered Dubois, “the good duke, the excellent marquis, and the worthy prince seemed rather worried. Besides, these respectable noblemen set to work rather late in the day to prevent the trial of their noble relative from following its course.”

“Has the sentence been pronounced, then?”

“It was pronounced half-an-hour ago, and Antoine Joseph de Horn, Count of the Holy Empire, and his associate, Lorenzo de Mille, a retired captain of the German regiment of Bréhenne, have been condemned to undergo ordinary and extraordinary torture, and then be taken to the Place de Grève and there be broken on the wheel, till death ensues. Oh, the gentlemen of the Tournelle have done very well,” added Dubois, rubbing his hands, “the sentence has not even any *retentum*.”

“What may that be?”

“A secret enactment by which the chamber sometimes mitigates a sentence by authorising the executioner to strangle the culprit before breaking his limbs.”

“They are mighty active, those gentle counsellors! But this zeal seems to me unnecessary, and I shall modify it, as it is my province to do. Sit down and write what I dictate.”

“What is it, my lord?”

“A commutation of the sentence. I dispense with the torture and the wheel, and my wish is that the culprits shall be decapitated to-morrow morning at the Conciergerie. Come, write, and let me sign at once!”

“I shall not write that, monseigneur, for it is absolutely necessary that these men should be broken on the wheel at the Place de Grève.”

“I just now refused to grant M. de Horn’s life to some gentlemen of the highest families because I think his crime deserving of death, but I do not wish it to be accompanied by useless cruelties.”

“Useless, monseigneur! you think it useless to make a public example of those who have dared to assassinate and rob a bearer of certificates of the Royal Bank?”

“What do the certificates or the money matter? The count, by virtue of his birth, has a right to decapitation, and shall have that right respected;

and as it would not be just to treat his accomplices worse than himself, the commutation applies to this fellow Mille also."

"Then, my lord, you must find some one else to write out this order," replied Dubois, stiffly; "I do not care to participate in drawing up a document which would take all confidence from the creditors of the bank, and consequently upset the finances of the kingdom."

"You refuse to obey me, then?" exclaimed the Regent, angrily.

"I do, and you will thank me later for doing so."

The minister said this with so much calmness and assurance that the duke, instead of writing out the commutation himself, began to walk up and down the room. "And you, Law, what is your opinion?" he asked, suddenly stopping before the inventor of the "system."

"I agree with Dubois," replied the Scotchman, firmly; "I think that energetic repression is necessary to prevent other crimes of the same sort. If the murder of the best known broker in the Rue Quincampoix is not punished with the utmost rigour, public credit will be shaken, and I, who am responsible, can only resign into your hands my position as Director of the Mississippi Company and Controller-General of Finance."

"Besides which," resumed Dubois, seeing that the argument of Law had already shaken the Regent's resolution, "if you do not have the condemned men tortured and broken on the wheel, you will lose an excellent opportunity of finding out all about Colonel La Jonquière."

"If you were really sure of these men's complicity with La Jonquière, I might consent to——"

"There is but one man who could tell us all about the Italian's doings —the detective who was charged to arrest the spurious Baroni, and who has never reappeared since he went to the Vanves quarry. But that does not prevent one questioning Lorenzo de Mille, and making him speak out."

"Let that be as it may, the same reasons do not exist as regards M. de Horn, and providing he undergoes capital punishment, justice will be done. Yes, it shall be as I have decided, and let no more be said. My secretary will write, as you refuse. Besides," added the Regent, abruptly, "I conversed this morning with M. de Saint Simon, and I promised him that this dreadful outrage upon a number of illustrious houses to which the count is allied should not be permitted."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dubois, "the secret is out; it is to please that pretty duke, full of his own ideas about the nobility, that you are about to offend the Parliament, and make the people discontented. As you please, monseigneur! No doubt the approbation of M. de Saint Simon and the gratitude of a set of Flemish squires will make up for the just resentment which you so lightly incur."

"Come, my dear Law," said the duke, much disturbed and greatly perplexed. "Is it my duty to suffer M. de Horn to die in the way Dubois suggests? have I the right to soil his name by allowing a disgraceful punishment to fall upon him?"

"Monseigneur," replied Law, gravely, "when the Count de Horn, the illustrious ancestor of Antoine Joseph, was executed with his cousin Egmont, in front of the Hôtel de Ville at Brussels, on the 15th of June, 1568, he was merely decapitated, and the Duke of Alba, who doomed him to death, did not refuse him that privilege, for the hero had committed no crime other than defending the liberty of his country. Do you think, monseigneur, that his descendant, who has committed murder and theft, deserves the same treatment?"

"You are right," said the Duke of Orleans, suddenly; "a noble has no right to the privilege of the scaffold unless he dies in a noble cause. M. de Horn shall die upon the wheel!"

It was written that the "Ace of Hearts" should always prove fatal to the Count de Horn, for it was doubtless Law's opinion that decided the Regent. Whilst the fate of the unfortunate count was being decided at the Palais Royal, his friends did not yet despair. There were two of them whose energy greatly surpassed that of the noble relatives of the condemned man. Madame de Parabère and Liévin loved the count for himself; Liévin had the love of a faithful dog for his master. As for Madame de Parabère, it would be a bold individual indeed who could undertake, at the present time to analyse the feelings which she entertained towards the young count. At all events, the check which she had met with in her attempt to soften the Duke of Orleans had put her upon her mettle, and when she got into her carriage she had made up her mind to do her utmost to save the condemned man from punishment. Liévin was waiting for her outside the Palais Royal with an aching heart; for, in despair, he had thought of appealing to the woman who was the indirect cause of the young count's ruin, and who—alone, it might be—had sufficient influence with the Regent to obtain his pardon. He was in despair when he learnt that his young master was condemned to death, and in agony he exclaimed: "All is lost, then!"

"No, not yet," said Madame de Parabère. "I am a woman, and what I wish to do, I do. Come with me; we have no time to lose! Get into my carriage!"

"Where do you intend going, madame?"

"To my house in the Place Vendôme. I will call my servants together, and even if I have to lead them myself, I will make up a determined body, and we will attack the escort between the Conciergerie and the Grève," exclaimed the marchioness, who was becoming more and more excited.

"Madame," said Liévin, suddenly, "are you determined to attempt anything, no matter what, to release M. de Horn?"

"Did I not tell you that I would give all I possessed, that I would risk my life?"

"Well, then, I know a man who, all alone, can do more for the saving of my master than an army. Will you consent to come with me to him?"

"Who is this man?"

"The public executioner."

"What! you wish me to go to the executioner's house?" exclaimed Madame de Parabère, who could not restrain a horrified start.

"Alas! madame," replied Liévin, "there is no one else who can enable us to save the count, who, in the past, saved this man's life."

"Saved his life?"

"Yes. It would be too long a story to tell you now. We are near Sanson's house. I will reveal to him that I am the count's servant, and he will remember that with my master I helped him to get rid of two robbers who had garrotted and were about to kill him."

In a few moments, and in obedience to the marchioness's orders, the carriage stopped at the house of Sanson. "I am expected at supper at the Palais Royal, and yet I am at the door of the executioner of Paris!" exclaimed Madame de Parabère, as they drove up. "I have come to implore his pity, but I had rather do that than go to that brute of a Dubois, or that stiff, formal Scotchman, Law."

The marchioness was greatly surprised to see Sanson's house and garden, equally so at seeing him, tall and of good appearance, as he rose, as soon as she appeared, from a bench in the garden to which a servant had brought her. The servant stood discreetly at a distance, and let Madame de Parabère and Liévin go up to his master by themselves. "Madame," said Charles Sanson, recognising the marchioness, "this house is seldom honoured by visits from persons of your rank. I am waiting with all due respect for you to tell me what has brought you to me."

"Well, you know that I have power at Court, and that my countenance would be useful to you? I promise to favour you if you will help me to save a man who has been sentenced."

"Alas! madame, I can save no one. I am neither prince, minister, nor judge, and I am not even a man. I am an arm moved by another will than my own. When I am told to strike, I must strike; when I am told to kill, I must kill. The Regent has the right to pardon in the King's name, I have only the right to kill."

"You do not, perhaps, know of whom I am speaking," the marchioness resumed, eagerly. "I am speaking of Count de Horn, a poor young man of twenty-two; they say that he killed a Jew in the Rue Quincampoix, in order to steal what he had about him: it is not true; it was the other one, the Piedmontese, who did the deed."

"Madame," replied Charles Sanson, "I was afraid that it was Count de Horn that you had come to see me about. I learned with great pain that he had been sentenced. But I can do no more, I repeat, than if M. de Horn were the most obscure of criminals. I am a mere tool, the tool of the law. My duty is to execute that law. I will never consent to fail in my duty, no, not for anything in the world."

"Do you want money?" exclaimed Madame de Parabère. "All that I possess is yours. Tell me the price you require for doing this service, and let it be what it may, I promise to pay it."

"Madame," interrupted Sanson, "I am paid by the King to fulfil my office and can accept nothing except from him."

M. de Paris said these words in so firm a tone that the marchioness felt that she was insisting in vain. Liévin had stood modestly in the background during the above conversation. Sanson had scarcely looked at him, no doubt taking him for the confidential servant of the marchioness. The latter now suddenly remembered what Liévin had said as to the executioner's obligations, and catching wildly at this last hope, she exclaimed, addressing the Fleming: "What are you doing there when you say that you have a claim, and boast that you can make yourself heard? Come forward! speak! the time has come, for my prayers and offers are useless. Speak! speak!"

Liévin thereupon came forward, and showed himself. Sanson looked at him very attentively. He was evidently trying to remember where he had seen the servant's honest face before. "Is it possible, master, that you do not remember me?" said the Fleming.

"No, I do not remember you, and yet it seems to me that—"

"I am sure that you have not forgotten a certain night in February, when, if you had not met us in the quarry of Les Gloriettes, and when without me, without us—"

"I should have been killed by the rascals who were holding me!" exclaimed Sanson, excitedly. "Ah! I have not forgotten that I owe my life to you, and I thank you from the depths of my heart for coming."

"Well, I have come to ask you for my master's life," said Liévin, in a low tone.

"Your master, the nobleman who, like you, so bravely and nobly defended me, and in spite of all my entreaties would not tell me his name?"

"His name! Alas! the time has come to reveal it. My master, my master who saved you, is the Count de Horn."

"Count de Horn! Impossible! you say this to put me to the proof!"

"Alas! it is but too true; arrested for a crime which he had no intention of committing. I swear that upon my life. Yet, to-morrow, it is you who will—"

"Oh, no!" muttered Sanson, who was shuddering with horror, "it will not be me! I should never have the courage to kill with my own hands the man who prevented those miserable wretches from killing me!"

"What does it matter whether it be your hand or that of your assistant that strikes him. And what a death! Ah, master, this is not what you promised when we came back to Paris, and you begged him to tell you his name, in order that you might some day prove to him how grateful you were!"

"But I can do nothing!" cried the executioner, wringing his hands in despair.

"If you ever need Charles Sanson, whatever you may ask he will do."

"So you have come to remind me of my promise? Ah, I had not yet felt heavily enough the weight of the horrible inheritance left to me by my father! At this moment, M. de Horn is shut up in the Conciergerie and kept in sight by bowmen; to-night an order will be brought to me, and I must obey it: to-morrow, I must go to his prison with my assistants, and there, before ten witnesses, perhaps, jailers, soldiers, counsellors, and a clerk, I must torture him."

Madame de Parabère uttered a cry of pain, and hid her face in her hands.

"Yes, madame, the sentence says that torture must be resorted to; and supposing that the count should, after this frightful trial, have any strength left, what could I do for him when he was stretched, as he would be, in the fatal waggon, with his limbs shattered, whilst being dragged through a crowd that hates him, and surrounded by a large guard? The Grève is not far from the Palais, and when we reach it, when I bring him to the scaffold, I shall only be able to pray Heaven that the earth may open and swallow up the instruments of punishment and me, the executioner, with them." Liévin, in terror, hung his head, and the marchioness wept. "Do you understand now why I despair?" said Charles Sanson, bitterly.

"Well, then," said Liévin, "we will save him without you. M. d'Havré will not desert his relative; I will go to his house, get his servants together, and all whom I can bribe with gold—"

"Take all I have!" interposed Madame de Parabère.

"I will put myself at their head," resumed Liévin, "I will rouse the populace. Law is a foreigner, and the Parisians hate him. Dubois is not liked, nor the Regent either; I will shout out against injustice and tyranny; and everybody will think me in the right, and we will charge at the escort and tear my master from the police agents, who will then have enough to do to keep the mob from plundering the Mississippi Bank and setting fire to the Palais Royal."

"I will aid you with all my power," said the marchioness, although she had many reasons for not ~~approving~~ the last part of this insurrectional programme.

The executioner listened in silence, but his countenance clearly expressed that he did not share Liévin's illusions. "Madame," said he, in a voice that showed his emotion; "I do not know what chance of success such an attempt may have, but the only hope that remains to us lies therein, and I will aid it as much as I can. If you attempt to deliver M. de Horn by force during the ride, or at the foot of the scaffold, I am not obliged to oppose your doing so. That duty belongs to the men of the watch, or the horse-police; it is for them to watch, and if they do not prevent the prisoner being set free, I shall bless Heaven for sparing me the necessity of giving him the mortal blow. I also promise you to tell the count that his friends have not deserted him, and hope to be able to carry him off on the road to the scaffold, so that he may hold himself in readiness to second their efforts, if possible. I also promise you to delay the progress of the escort by forbidding my assistant to urge our horses on, and by telling him to stop as soon as I see the least movement in the crowd indicating any sympathy with the condemned man. I promise you, besides, that when the attack takes place I will cut the ropes that bind him. Heaven grant that he may have strength enough to hold out his arms to his rescuers. No matter what may happen, I will do all I can to help things on to his advantage."

"Very well," replied Madame de Parabère, in so firm a tone that Sanson was startled by it; "I believe in your promises, and I also understand that you cannot go beyond them. It is my place now to do all that I can, and I shall not fail to do so. But I have other requests to make of you. If my hopes fail, if M. de Horn must die upon the scaffold, swear to me you will whisper my name in his ear before he appears before Heaven, swear to me to tell him that I came here, that I did everything that I could to save him, that I prayed for him up to the last moment, and that, if he dies, my heart will remember him for ever. Swear this to me—"

Sobs choked Madame de Parabère's voice, and Sanson, almost as much overcome as she, knelt down before her, and said: "I swear it to you, madame, and I swear that if Count de Horn must die by my hand, that hand will at least spare him the horrors of prolonged suffering."

"Thanks," said the marchioness; "I have faith in you. But one last prayer—if he dies, promise me some object belonging to him, something he has touched."

"I can cut off a lock of his hair."

"Thanks! thanks! You have guessed my wish. And now at what hour is the sentence to be executed?"

"Madame, according to my orders we shall leave the Conciergerie at about two to-morrow, and I think that at three o'clock all will be over."

"That is more than time enough to tear him from the hands of his tormentors," said Madame de Parabère. "Farewell! Farewell! remember us, and your promise!" Then she hastily ran away through the long, dark alleys of the garden. Liévin followed her without having the courage to add a word to the executioner, and Sanson, left alone, thought sadly of the morrow.

XIV.

THE 26th of March, 1720, came on the Tuesday of Holy Week, which was the last day of Lent on which the law at that time allowed the execution of a criminal sentence.

Sanson was determined to do all in his power to keep his promise, and favour the rescue. He was less determined, however, as regards braving the sight of Horn and the reproaches of that unfortunate nobleman. He therefore wished to put off the painful hour as long as possible. It was not necessary that he should appear at the torture. He accordingly delegated that fearful office to one of his assistants, and did not go to the Conciergerie till late in the morning. When he came up with his equipage the crowd had already surrounded the doors of the prison; a noisy and turbulent crowd, but not in the least favourable to the condemned men. Sanson ordered his assistant to drive the cart under the vaulted entrance of the Conciergerie, and a clerk conducted him to the room where Antoine Joseph de Horn and Lorenzo de Mille lay extended upon their mattresses. The torture had done its work, and the unfortunate men were horribly mutilated, for they had had the eighth wedge of the torture of the boot. Sanson was in no haste to show himself to M. de Horn, and seated himself beside his assistants, while waiting till the dean of the counsellors gave orders to start for the Grève. From that place he could see and listen, without attracting the attention of the condemned men.

To his great astonishment, he saw that Lorenzo de Mille appeared much more resigned than the count. The Piedmontese adventurer listened attentively to the consolations of the priest, and did not let a complaint escape him. The executioner remarked, however, that his eyes were strangely bright, and that he often turned towards the door as though he looked for aid from without. M. de Horn was very pale, but the dreadful sufferings which he had undergone had over-excited instead of depressing him. He gesticulated with feverish vivacity, and uttered incoherent words, which would have justified the assertions as to his madness which his defenders had brought forward to obtain his pardon. He violently repulsed the priest who had come from the Sorbonne, and loudly demanded the presence of the Lord Bishop, François de Lorraine, who had given him communion the night before. The priest mildly replied that the prelate, having been obliged to return to his diocese, could not come; but the unfortunate man would not calm himself, and began to wander in his mind and to abuse and call upon the bishop, who was a distant relation of his. "The poor lad has lost his mind," muttered Sanson, in consternation; "he will not be able to second those who wish to rescue him!"

Time passed till the counsellors, judging that the priest had given sufficient consolation to the condemned men, and anxious, perhaps, to go to dinner, rose, and after addressing two or three questions to the prisoners—questions which brought no answer—made signs to the executioner to bear them away. Sanson allowed the order to be executed, and first the count and then Mille were raised up and placed in the cart. At last, mustering up his courage, Sanson also got in.

The two culprits were within, leaning against the back of the cart, with their shattered legs extended upon the straw. Sanson placed himself near M. de Horn, and waited to address him till the mournful equipage went out upon the quay. It was very dark under the vault where the cart was standing, so that the count did not at first see the executioner's face; but when it appeared in the daylight, Antoine Joseph turned his haggard eyes upon Sanson, and his face assumed an indescribable expression of contempt and anger. However, he said not a word. The executioner, to prevent the explosion of anger which he dreaded, bent down

and hastily said in his ear: "Hope, my lord. There are persons who are interested in you, and I myself——"

"You lie!" cried the count, furiously. "No one is interested in me; my relatives have abandoned me. The bishop ought to have returned. Where is he?"

"At this moment a woman is praying for you—a great lady. She can do anything she wishes, and will not remain inactive."

"What is her name? Tell me."

"She is the Marchioness de Parabère," whispered Sanson.

At this name Antoine Joseph seemed to grow calmer. A moment later his face expressed lively emotion. "Who knows?" said Sanson, "there may yet be a pardon."

The count's lips curled scornfully. "If they had meant to pardon me, they would not have made me a cripple," said he, bitterly.

"A bold stroke may rescue you. I promised the marchioness not to oppose it, for I have not forgotten that you saved my life."

"You remember, do you? My noble relatives do not remember. Why does not the bishop come?"

The unfortunate man began to wander in his mind again, and the executioner saw that he could not say more, and that it would be better to watch the crowd, and try to find any friendly face that might be there or detect any sign directed to the condemned man. He straightened himself up and looked about him, his eyes meeting those of Lorenzo de Mille. The priest was reading some prayers with an all-absorbing fervour, and did not see that the Piedmontese, apparently so resigned, was raising his head, and looking right and left for some one among the spectators upon the quay. "He hopes, too, it seems," thought Sanson, greatly surprised at this behaviour on the part of the second culprit.

The fact is, although crushed by the torments which he had undergone without revealing anything, Mille still firmly believed that La Jonquière, at the head of his band, would charge at the escort, and thus deliver him. No sign was seen of any suspicious approach, nor of anybody in the crowd who had a thought of the condemned men. The guard on horseback pranced around the funeral procession; the policemen were in front, behind, and before it. The executioner did not see anything save the prying faces of the police spies, and other countenances which betokened only malignant curiosity. Cries of "Death! death to them!" arose from point to point in some of the groups gathered together. All this augured nothing good, and when the cart had passed the Pont au Change without any definite movement in the crowd, Sanson utterly despaired. At this moment the count aroused himself from the stupor into which he had fallen, and suddenly exclaimed: "You see that you have tried to deceive me. They have not come, and here is the Grève."

"Monseigneur," stammered the executioner, "I swear to you that Madame de Parabère promised me——"

"Tell the marchioness that I forgive her," interrupted M. de Horn, "and if you see her add that I died as a nobleman should die"

This calmness, following upon such feverish agitation, surprised Sanson and affected him deeply. At this moment the executioner would have willingly given his house and his fortune to have seen that a rescue was really about to be attempted. Nothing stirred, however, and the cart came up without impediment to the foot of the scaffold, which stood in the centre of the Place, facing the Hôtel de Ville, where the counsellor

delegated to be present at the execution was seated in red robes. The final hour had come, and Sanson saw with horror that he was obliged to fulfil his office.

"Ask to make some revelations," said he, in a low tone. "You can thus gain time, and give your friends a chance to act."

Unfortunately, the count seemed to wander in his mind again. "I knew that the bishop would not come," cried he; "they have arrested him, too, because he held some Mississippi stock; but we shall see! I will pay dearly for my life. Let me only have arms. I cannot be refused arms!"

Sanson took him up, sprang from the cart, and went up the steps of the scaffold, holding Horn's panting body above his head. He thought that by doing so the friends of the house of Horn would see that a last appeal was made to them, and that he might thus give a signal to the servants of the marchioness scattered about the Place. He was mistaken, however. There was some stir in the crowd, then a loud inurmuring, almost immediately followed by profound silence, but that was all. Antoine Joseph de Horn was lost.

* * * * *

Scarcely was the execution over when five carriages, with arms upon their panels, drawn by six horses, and hung with crape, came noisily up the Place. The first were those of the Duke d'Havré, the Prince de Ligne, and the Duke de Rohan. The Marquis de Créquy descended from the last but one, wearing the uniform of a Brigadier-General, with the collar of the Golden Fleece about his neck and the grand cordon of Saint Louis upon his breast. He crossed the Place with a firm step and head erect; room was made for this high personage afflicted with so great a grief. When he reached the foot of the scaffold, he made a sign, and Sanson gave orders to the assistants to unfasten the mutilated body of Antoine Joseph de Horn, and then carry it to the last carriage. M. de Créquy, no doubt as a protest against the cruelty of the sentence, insisted upon holding one of Horn's legs, which only held to his body by fragments of bleeding flesh. When this was done, the carriages started off in procession to the house of the Countess de Montmorencys, who was of the house of Horn. There the count's remains were placed in a coffin and carried to a lighted chapel, where they remained for forty-eight hours, after which they were transported to the Château of Baussignies, in the Netherlands. Antoine Joseph at least had the privilege of being buried in the tomb of his ancestors.

Sanson had found an opportunity to cut a curl of hair from the icy brow of the unfortunate nobleman whom he had not been able to save. He wrapped it in a little bag and sent it to the Marquise de Parabère, with these simple words—"The promised *souvenir*." Of all the promises made on the occasion of Horn's horrible death, but one had been kept, that of the executioner.

That same day was destined to be a remarkable one in the life of Chevalier du Terne as well.

Since his interview with Gudule on Saturday night he had wandered hap-hazard about Paris, sleeping in the open air, without caring for the fatigue, privation, or danger which he underwent, his heart filled with a single feeling and his mind with a single purpose. The scattering of the conspirators, the departure of Colonel La Jonquière, the horrible adven-

ture of the Count de Horn, all was forgotten in the thought of the imprisoned girl at the Hôpital Général. Gudule had declared that they would have at least eighteen hours' advance if all their plans went well, and this time would be abundantly sufficient, even supposing, which was not certain, that M. d'Argenson should think fit to set the police and the marshalsea upon their track with the sole aim of recovering a girl whose capture was now of no importance to the interests of the State.

On the day of the projected appointment, as soon as Terne saw the last rays of the sun gilding the towers of Notre-Dame, he went towards the place of meeting. He remarked that near the court-yard of the Hôpital Général there was a cordon of soldiers of the guard, and he thought that he saw policemen behind the gratings. He then had a vague feeling that some misfortune was about to happen. How could Violet pass in Gudule's clothes through the assembled crowd without attracting attention? Six o'clock was about to strike, and it was the hour for the escape. The chevalier felt his heart sink. Suddenly a door opened near the grating, and he saw a woman come out, dressed in grey woollen, with a wide-spreading coif, having a black veil that fell over her face. "It is she!" he murmured, with a start of joy.

The fugitive drew near slowly, as it was necessary to do to disarm suspicion. Gudule had warned Terne that she would pass near him without speaking to him, and according to her instructions he made ready to follow her and to accost her at the other end of the market; but scarcely had the woman with the coif passed the trees than she stopped, and at the same moment raised her veil. "Gudule!" exclaimed Terne, who recoiled with surprise at seeing the detective's daughter. "You! you! what has happened?"

The orphan girl, instead of replying to his questions and exclamations, made him a sign not to leave his place at the foot of the trees, and walked on. She wished to avoid a conversation that would be remarked in the open street, and at fifty paces from the crowd that had gathered before the gate. It might, indeed, be dangerous, especially to the chevalier, to attract the attention of the officials of the Hôpital Général. Though his impatience was great, Terne managed to restrain it, and waited till Gudule was beyond the reach of inquisitive eyes before renewing his questions. Then only did he remark the change in her face, and perceive that she was trembling like a leaf. "What is the matter, my child?" said Terne, trying to hide his emotion. "The crowd frightened you, did it not, and you are afraid to make the attempt to-day?" Gudule hung her head and burst into tears. "Why are you so distressed?" said the chevalier. "What we have not done to-day we can do to-morrow. This delay will not discourage me, I assure you, and even though I must wait many days, I shall always be ready." Gudule went on weeping without a word. "You alarm me," said Terne, "especially by remaining silent. I beg of you not to keep me in this terrible suspense. I can bear what you may have to tell. Have our plans been discovered, and have you been expelled from the house?"

"No," muttered the orphan girl, "but there is no hope now! Look there!"

Just then, the crowd which had gathered before the gate was spreading over the boulevard, driven back by four mounted policemen, who were making their horses prance about in order to clear the road. This little vanguard preceded a cart drawn by six horses, and followed by

half-a-dozen police-agents afoot. The whole party went slowly up the street, and was about to pass before the entrance of the market. Terne did not understand at first what all this meant. He saw, however, that the cart contained a number of women, old ones in rags, others faded before their time and in tarnished finery, and some young and modestly attired. These last were silently weeping, and endeavouring to hide their faces, while their elders, having lost all shame, were mocking at the police-agents, and replying by coarse words to the insults of the crowd. The chevalier suddenly uttered a cry of anger and grief. In the midst of this gang, and in the front part of the cart, he had recognised Violet. She was pale and weak, her head hung down, and her face was bathed in tears. "Ah!" said he, in a stifled tone, "this is the misfortune which you had not the courage to make known to me. They are taking her away, and I shall see her no more. It is better to die now, and before her eyes. Farewell, Gudule, farewell!" Then Terne, in despair, pushed back the detective's daughter, and was about to rush toward the fatal cart; but the orphan held on to him with incredible strength and prevented him from leaving her. "Where are you going?" she demanded, putting her arms round him.

"To strangle one of those bowmen with my own hands, the rascals! and then, if the others do not kill me, to throw myself under the wheels, that I may be crushed to death!"

"You must not do that. I told her that you would live and save her!"

"Save her! Are you mad, Gudule? How can I hope to do so?"

"Let them pass, and when this crowd has dispersed, and we need not fear observation, we will leave the spot. Then I will tell you what I have learned and what my plans are."

Terne looked at Gudule, and saw such sincerity and so much decision in her face, that he took courage and restrained himself. The cart now reached the top of the slope and turned to the right of the Boulevard d'Italie. The hospital gate closed, and the crowd began to scatter. "Come," said Gudule.

Terne followed, without knowing what he did. The young girl led him to a lonely street, and then spoke as follows: "I heard what was to happen only this morning. The overseer told me that a party was to be made up and taken away. I was still in doubt, for I thought that they would not be so infamous as to place Violet with those dreadful creatures; but I saw her and was able to speak with her for a moment in the garden, and she told me that she had been ordered to make ready for departure."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed the chevalier, "what are they going to do with her?"

"What! Don't you know? You have not heard, then, that the foreigner who planned the India Bank has devised another scheme to people his lands on the Mississippi, and that, by his orders, women are taken every day out of Paris?"

"Ah! this is horrible!" exclaimed Terne.

"When they saw," resumed Gudule, "that neither persecution nor threats would make their victim speak, and gave up the hope of obtaining any avowal that would acquaint them with aught of the conspiracy, they resolved to get rid of her. Orders came yesterday to include her among those who were to be taken away, and——"

"Where do they mean to take her?" interrupted the chevalier.

"To Brest, where a vessel is waiting to bear her to America ; but it shall not be done, for Heaven will help us !" said Gudule, gently.

"No, for even if I have to become a corsair or a pirate to prevent it, and attack the ship, I will tear Violet from them."

"Listen," said Gudule. "I have, I think, a more sensible and practicable plan than yours. The cart is going on slowly, and the police will require fifteen or twenty days to reach Brest. It will be best to let them go on, and catch up with them at thirty or forty leagues from Paris. Provided that we can keep up with them for a certain number of days, it matters little whether it be early or late, and the nearer the end of the journey the easier what we have to do will be."

"Go along beside those rascally spies !" exclaimed Terne. "Do you mean that, Gudule?"

"I do, and I see no other way of attaining our aim. We will pass ourselves off as a merchant and his sister going to Brittany on business. We will say that we are following the same road as the party in the cart."

"And do you think that the police-agents will allow us to follow them? You think that they will not suspect us?"

"No, for we have a good reason to give for keeping beside them. The roads are not safe, and they will think it quite natural that a merchant with his pockets well filled should seek protection against robbers. Besides, these people are easily bribed, and by treating them every evening you will soon be in their good graces."

"Yes, I begin to believe that it may be——"

"I am sure that they will not send us away. None of them know me. I was able to find that out in the court-yard of the Hôpital-Général. Now, do you not think that an occasion will present itself during this journey when we shall all be together—some night, for instance—when we can get the better of their watchfulness ?"

"And carry off Violet, fly with her, reach the frontier, the sea, perhaps, and leave the kingdom after we have escaped from their pursuit? Yes, I now see that all this is possible. I have money enough to suffice for the preparations for the journey and the journey itself."

"I also have taken from home the little that I possess. We must have clothing suitable to the parts we are about to play, and horses, which you alone can choose and buy, but you dare not show yourself."

"A trusty man," replied Terne, "will do all that for me. He made an appointment with me on the banks of the Seine for Tuesday, March 26th, a little before sunset. The time has now come." Terne alluded to Liévin in saying this.

"Then you must go to him," replied Gudule, with decision. "I will go with you," added she.

It did not take long to reach the appointed place. As Terne drew near, he thought that he caught sight of a human form beneath a willow-tree, under which he had slept more than once. Fortunate, indeed, was the coming of the chevalier, for the unhappy and faithful servant of the Count de Horn, driven to utter despair by the horrible death of his beloved master, was about to hang himself, and had slipped the fatal noose about his neck, when Terne came up, only just in time to cut the rope and bring Liévin to the ground. The Fleming gave a frightful, convulsive gasp, and tried to rid himself of the man who had rescued him. "Let me die!" said he; "let me die! I do not wish to live! I will not survive my poor master! They have put him to death as though he had

heen the worst of criminals, and I could not even embrace his shattered body ! ”

“ Could no one help him, not even Madame de Parahère ? ” demanded Terne, trying to divert the mind of Liévin from his desperate resolve by talking to him of his master. “ It was she who was the cause of his ruin, ” added Terne, before Liévin could reply ; “ she should have helped him. ”

“ She promised to do so, and was all ardour, and talked of sacrificing all she had in the world. She promised me, in the afternoon, to call out all her servants to aid me in rescuing my master, but at night, when, after having failed to obtain any help from the Duke d’Havré, I went to her house on the Place Vendôme, the servant told me that she had gone to her villa at Asnières, and shut the door in my face. I passed the night in despair at the door of the prison where my master was. When I reached the Place de Grève to-day, all was over. The family carriages bore the body away. Ah ! I have nothing more to live for in this world, now that the count is dead ! ”

“ Listen to me, ” said Terne. “ Do you wish to avenge your master ? Do you wish to punish the Regent, who suffered him to perish, and the pitiless minister, who urged Philip of Orleans to refuse him pardon ? If you do, you must help me. ”

“ Ah ! if I thought— ”

“ I am disarmed now ; my friends have dispersed ; but I can rejoin them, and the conspiracy may be set afoot again if I succeed in leaving France after having rescued an unfortunate girl— ”

“ The daughter of Blanche-Barbe ? ” said Liévin, with a start ; “ ah, I remember ! ”

“ Yes, and as you remember that I told you of her misfortunes, you must also recollect that you promised me, three days ago, on this spot, to help me to defend her from those who are persecuting her. ‘ When I have saved my master, ’ you said, ‘ I will devote myself entirely to you. ’ M. de Horn is dead, but this young girl still lives, and you ought to be glad to tear her from her persecutors, for those who are ill-treating her are the same who sent the count to the scaffold. ”

Liévin uttered an exclamation, the meaning of which it was difficult to seize. At this moment Gudule came forward. “ Sir, ” said she to Liévin, “ M. de Grandpré has told me that you can furnish us with the means of helping a person whom we both love, and who will die in wretchedness in America, if we do not succeed in rescuing her on the road between Paris and Brest. You will not disappoint us, I am convinced of it. ”

“ Heaven forbid ! ” exclaimed Liévin. “ You are right, chevalier, here is work for me to do. Tell me what it is that you desire, ” he added, throwing away the rope with which he had attempted to hang himself, and appearing to gather courage once more. Then he resumed : “ How can I serve you and the young girl ? ”

“ You can get us clothes and horses, and start for Brittany with us to-morrow. I will tell you all that remains to be done when once we have started. ”

“ Agreed ! ” replied Liévin, and the three at once set out for the house of a countryman of the valet’s, who, so Liévin informed Terne, had kept clothes and horses for Horn’s use, and would now let him have them for the chevalier himself.

XV.

ON the Easter Monday which followed the death of M. de Horn upon the scaffold, Dubois was in his study working as usual, having forbidden that any one should be admitted. He was busy classifying papers when his secretary, Venier, suddenly opened the door and pushed in a man who was strangely attired. The individual who took the liberty of thus disturbing the busy minister had a pallid, wrinkled, tanned face, and wore a shabby coat all in tatters, torn breeches, stockings with holes in them, and worn-out shoes. His appearance was so unprepossessing that Dubois at once picked up an inkstand to throw it at his head. "Monseigneur, I am Larfaille!" exclaimed the man.

"Who may Larfaille be?" said the Secretary of State, without firing the missile, but holding on to it.

"Is it possible, monseigneur, that you have forgotten my name? I am the detective whom you sent last month to arrest Colonel La Jonquière in the Vanves plains."

This time Dubois let fall his weapon, and ran with clenched fists towards his visitor. "Ah, you rascal! ah, you scamp! So you dare to show your face here when you are the cause of all my plans falling through? You have come to ask for your dues, I suppose! You shall have them, for I will have you put in a dungeon underground, and leave you there till you die!"

This furious tirade did not disturb the man who had returned to life, as it were, and he replied in a firm though respectful tone: "Monseigneur, be sure that if I had any serious fault to blush for, I should not appear before you, and be good enough to listen to me, for I bring you the only means of catching La Jonquière."

Dubois looked at Larfaille and saw that he was speaking the truth. "Well, where have you come from?" he asked.

"From the forest of Orleans. I was made prisoner by a band of robbers, who surprised me in the Gloriettes quarry on the night when I was waiting for the colonel to come there."

"That is not true. Robbers don't keep detectives with them when they catch them; they kill them."

"They came very near killing me, my lord, and death would perhaps have been better than the tortures which they made me suffer down there. I was chained up in a corner of a subterranean cave, which served as their den, and beaten from morning till night, and worse fed than a dog even. But one night, when they had all gone out to rob a farm-house, I succeeded in breaking my bonds and making my escape. I came to Paris on foot, and begged my way, and it is a miracle that they did not catch me again, for they certainly pursued me."

"Come to the colonel. What about him?"

"Monseigneur," resumed the detective, "misfortune awaited me here. During my absence a young girl, an orphan whom I loved as though she had been my daughter, and whom I took the liberty to ask you to protect, has disappeared."

"What! you scamp! have you come here to tell me your family affairs? Tell me about the colonel, if you do not wish me to kick you down stairs!"

“ The two stories are connected,” replied Larfaillé, without appearing disturbed. One of La Jonquière’s friends has stolen my adopted daughter from me.”

“ Come,” said Duhois, in a calmer tone, “ explain yourself, for I cannot understand you.”

“ My assistant and friend, Pillavoine, the detective who took my place, told me all about the affair to-day. When I returned to my poor lodgings and could not find Gudule—my adopted daughter, whom this wretch has taken from me—I went to my comrade, and he gave me details that admit of no doubt. After the arrest of that Piedmontese adventurer, the accomplice of Count de Horn, who was affiliated to the plot, the colonel left Paris. He was afraid that torture would cause Lorenzo de Mille to confess.”

“ I hoped that it would, but the hardened scoundrel did not confess anything. It is Law’s fault, for he was in a great hurry to make an example of him on account of his bank. But go on. You said that La Jonquière had gone.”

“ Yes, my lord ; I am sure that he is no longer in the city, but I also know that he has not given up his plans against the Regent. His departure is but a feint. Now, monseigneur, you remember that I suspected that a certain flower-girl was the sweetheart of La Jonquière’s principal assistant, his lieutenant ?”

“ Yes, of course I do ! That is why we shut her up. We thought that her lover would be caught prowling about his beauty’s prison, but he did not fall into the trap.”

“ Well, I must tell you that the lover of the flower-girl is the same man who has carried off my adopted daughter.”

“ Oho ! the scamp must be a great lady-killer.”

“ Yes,” replied Larfaillé, with a sombre air, “ he is one of those to whom the devil has given an infernal power over poor, simple, trusting girls. He has taken advantage of Gudule’s grief and isolation to persuade her to go with him ; it is my cherished child that he has stolen from me.”

While Larfaillé was giving way to this outhurst Dubois looked calmly at him, and realised that his deep love for his adopted daughter might he turned to account for the State. If any one could rid the Regent of La Jonquière and his accomplices, it was surely this man, whom personal hatred urged on to wage pitiless war upon the conspirators. The wily minister took care not to refuse so precious an auxiliary. “ All that is evident,” replied he, with a satisfied air, “ and I can well understand that you should be so much in earnest. But what means will you use ? What do you require in order to finish with these men ?”

“ First of all, monseigneur, let me tell you that I no longer hold a place in the police of the kingdom. I was thought to be dead ; I have been removed from the list of detectives, and another has been put in my place. Now, as I am no longer under the orders of the lieutenant of police, I am in all the better position to carry out any mission which it may please you to confide to me. I would ask you to give me an order signed by yourself, stating that I, Jean Larfaillé, secret agent of the Secretary of State, am authorised to requisition the help of the public force in whatever part of the kingdom it may be, including the assistance of magistrates, overseers ; in fact, of all the King’s men.”

“ You shall have it. What then ?”

“ Also a written authorisation to choose from among the mounted

watch six men, well armed, who shall be at my disposal, and bound to follow me and obey me on all occasions."

"That is granted also. Is that all?"

"That is all, monseigneur, and I will bring all these scoundrels back to you, or I will die by their hand."

"That is a fine assurance; what good would your death do, pray?"

"I shall not die, don't fear it."

"Humph! After all, that concerns you, and at that risk I am willing to take my chance of your catching the colonel, uncertain though it be; for it is uncertain, you cannot deny that."

"No, my lord, but I am sure of reaching him by following the track of his lieutenant, who assuredly left Paris to join him."

"Then you know which way the lieutenant went?"

"Not yet, but I soon shall, for I know a man who knows all the secrets of the band, and I have a means of making him speak, and shall interrogate him."

"You will arrest him afterwards, I suppose?"

"On that head, my lord, I shall ask your permission to act according to circumstances. This man can render us all a very great service, so long as he is at liberty, and his situation is such that he will not know how to get away easily. We shall be able in any case to stop him when the proper time comes."

"What is his name?"

"Blanche-Barbe. He is the innkeeper who has the Epée de Bois."

"How much money do you need to bribe him?"

"None."

"Do you intend to carry on the war at your own expense, then? You must be rich."

"No. But in the twenty years during which I have been serving the King, I have laid by a little money. My daughter has not touched what my will left to her, except as to the interest, of which Master Crozat paid her the first quarterly amount last month. I can, therefore, make use of this money which I intended to use as her dowry."

This proof of disinterestedness decided the minister to grant all Larfaillé's requests. "Go," said he, as he handed the agent the orders which he had asked for, "and do not come before me again, unless you bring me the colonel, dead or alive."

The agent did not need to hear these words twice, but took his leave with a low bow. He now turned his footsteps in the direction of the Cul-de-sac de Venise. Since his last visit great changes had taken place at the Epée de Bois. The murder of Abraham the Jew had been fatal to Blanche-Barbe's business. The prosperity of the tavern was closely connected with that of the Mississippi Bank, as its best customers were composed of the speculators who frequented the Rue Quincampoix. The audacious crime, the victim of which had been one of the richest brokers, had, as Law predicted, caused the stocks to run down in value. Folks began to say, too, that stocks had numerous drawbacks, and, as the *system* was already greatly shaken, this was enough to cool the ardour of the speculators. Few among them now cared to frequent the famous room on the first floor, where bearers of the company's paper were so easily made away with. The financiers now preferred to go elsewhere to quench their thirst, and the tavern was soon deserted altogether. Larfaillé, as he drew near, saw Master Pierre standing as usual in the

doorway, smoking his pipe. Seeing Larfaille, Pierre spat on the ground, as though to show his contempt of the forlorn appearance which the detective presented ; and when the ragged new-comer stopped in front of him, his contempt turned into anger. "Go on !" cried he, in a voice of thunder, "we don't give alms here."

"I do not ask you to do so, master," said Larfaille, quietly, "and I advise you to make less noise, as you will attract attention, and I have something to say to you in private."

"You ! Tell that to somebody else, my friend. I don't know such people as you."

"Do you know this ?" As he spoke, Larfaille took the ministerial order from his pocket, and spread it out before the astonished gaze of Blanche-Barbe. The sight of the Secretary of State's seal and signature had a magical effect upon the innkeeper, who turned pale, took his pipe from his mouth, and was about to go into the house. "I order you to stay where you are," said Larfaille, in a tone of authority ; "I am a detective, as you can see by this order, and have full confidential powers from the minister, and am sent by him to question you as to certain things. Be good enough to answer me here, for I have reasons for not going inside with you. And just remember that there are ten of my men near here, in hiding, who are only waiting for a signal from me to come to my aid."

These ten men only existed in Larfaille's imagination ; nevertheless, they produced an immense effect, for Master Blanche-Barbe turned pale, and in a much milder tone replied : "No need of that. I have no idea of disobeying the minister's orders, and am ready to answer you. What do you wish from me ?"

"That you should tell me where Colonel La Jonquière now is, and his first lieutenant as well, the man who was called 'M. Lestang,' when he was living with Master La Perrelle, the mercer in the Rue Saint-Antoine."

"I do not know anything about all that ; I do not know them," stammered the innkeeper.

"Spare yourself the trouble of telling falsehoods. We are perfectly well aware that your house has long been the meeting-place of the colonel's gang, and that you know all the secrets of the conspirators ; but we also know that they have scattered, and that you have nothing further to do with their affairs. I have orders to take you at once to the Châtelet if you refuse to answer me."

"I have nothing to reproach myself with," replied Blanche-Barbe, in a surly tone. "Those people frequented my house as many others do. It was not in my power to prevent it, but as soon as I knew what they were I drove them away. I defy any one to say that a single one of them has been seen here since the affair of that villain Horn."

"We know all about that," replied Larfaille, evasively, "and we shall be indulgent according as you may serve us. I return to my question, where are these men now ?"

"I know nothing about the colonel. There is some reason to think that he went towards the Spanish frontier."

"And the other, where is he ?"

"The other, who took the name of Lestang ? Oh ! I saw him on the night of Holy Tuesday coming out of the horse-market in company with a woman ; they did not see me, for it was nightfall, and I had the curiosity to follow them——"

"What was the girl with him like?"

"She looked like a sickly child."

Larfaille needed all his self-command not to betray his emotion at this statement. "Go on," said he, with an effort.

"Well, then, they stopped under the penthouse of a deserted tannery. I slipped up near them, and listened as long as it suited me to do so. I heard this creature tell Lestang that she would go with him anywhere; but that, for the time being, they must set out to rescue a certain young girl whom the detectives had taken from the Hôpital Général to convey her to Brest, where she was to be put on a vessel which would convey her, and others like her, to Louisiana."

"What!" exclaimed Larfaille; "were they talking about the flower-girl of the Rue Quincampoix?"

"Exactly. It touches me closely, as I have always been supposed to be her father, and I know all about what she said, and did. She fell in love with this Lestang, who turns the heads of all the women, it appears. It was to catch him that she was arrested, and that was a good idea, for he is running after her now. Track them, and seize them. I shall be delighted, for I hate them both."

"You hate your daughter!" exclaimed the police-agent, in disgust.

"Yes, I hate her, as I hate her mother," replied Blanche-Barbe, coarsely, "and, if you don't believe me, I will make you a proposal that will take away all your doubts. I am tired of the life I am leading here, and I only desire now to go and end my days far from a house I dislike, and a woman I detest. I am rich, I have turned all I possess into money, and only need a chance to get to foreign parts, but I fear being arrested before I cross the frontier. Swear to me that you will enable me to get off, and I will put you in the way of catching La Jonquière; besides that, if you desire to pursue him on the road to Brést, I will go with you till you lay hands upon him. When you have caught this Lestang, and the girl he is taking about with him, when I am sure that his other sweetheart is on the way to America, we shall be quits, and I'll leave you, and embark for Spain or England."

"And you assure me that this man did not go away alone, but took the delicate-looking girl with him?"

"I do, and you will see that with your own eyes when we come up with them."

"Very well," said Larfaille, quietly; "from this moment you belong to me, and we must set out to-night for Brest."

France, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, did not shine as regards its facilities for travel. Riders on horseback were in the majority under the Regency, and the little caravan composed of Violet's friends did not excite any curiosity or surprise. Liévin had kept his word as to what he had promised. His fellow-countryman, the innkeeper of the Faubourg Saint-Denis, was very desirous of pleasing him, and very easily bribed; and he had plenty of horses and clothing, as he added to his own business that of horse-dealer and old-clothes seller. He had no trouble in equipping everybody completely, and found his account in it, for he was generously paid. Terne chose a pretty Limousin horse. He gave Gudule a mare from Le Perche, and Liévin made choice of a chestnut Mecklenburger, which, being vigorous, served also to carry the baggage. The wardrobe of the party was placed in a large valise which Horn's faithful servant took with him. As for costumes, the innkeeper had an assort-

ment of them, and the party were able to attire themselves as they desired. The two men arrayed themselves as a merchant and a merchant's assistant, and Gudule decided upon a riding-suit as then worn, with a wide hat with a raised brim, a grey woolen skirt, and a cloak with a cape. She rode in the old-fashioned way, on a side saddle which had a back to it. The two men, apart from their attire, were equipped in military style, with swords at their sides and pistols in their saddle-bows, as the most peaceable people at that time did not think of such a thing as travelling in any other way. Gudule directed the course of the party, as she knew the stopping-places of the cart which was bearing Violet away, having learned these at the Hôpital-Général. Terne knew the use of a map, which at that time was not common. He wrote out the list of the stopping-places, and studied an old plan of the road, which Liévin's fellow-countryman had at hand. Gudule thought, and the chevalier agreed with her, that it would be preferable not to come up with the cart till they were a good distance from Paris. Terne thought that it would be best, also, to have no communication with the police until they should be in the heart of Brittany. Thereabouts the country was full of woods and moors, where they could easily keep out of sight. They would be near the sea, too, and consequently able to reach the coast and hire a bark that would take them to Spain or England. Until then, it would suffice to follow the same road as the cart, taking care to inquire as to its course at each halting-place—in the very improbable event of the police leaving the given road. They had no difficulty in finding out the route followed by the cart. The people of the country round about were inclined to pity the lot of the prisoners, and this was a favourable symptom. The story told by Terne to the hosts of the divers inns the party stopped at, in order to explain his journey, was everywhere believed, and this was another reason for rejoicing. They travelled on thus, without any notable occurrence during the first two weeks, across Le Perche, Normandy, and Maine, and on the fourteenth day arrived at Saint-Méen, a village in Brittany. They had now come to a spot favourable for an attempt at rescue, and the chevalier made up his mind to go on more rapidly on the morrow, for the decisive moment was near. The escort of the cart was principally composed of police-agents on foot. The head of the squad was the only man mounted, and it did not appear likely that he would leave the rest to pursue a single sheep which might escape from the fold. As for the horse-police, which was required to accompany the party about, it appeared, from what was said along the road, that this was but carelessly done. Three days out of four the infantry did without the gendarmes, and reduced to their own resources, were not in a condition to pursue men on horseback. There remained but six stopping-places between Saint-Méen and Brest. The time had come, then, for catching up with the cart, which was now but little ahead. There must be time for getting into the good graces of the sergeant at the head of these men, and studying his habits, in order to be able to turn this knowledge to account at the first opportunity favourable to the rescue. It had been determined upon that Terne should say that he was a Parisian trading in colonial products, and going to Brest to receive a cargo of sugar which his correspondent in the West Indies had sent him.

Terne was very desirous of inducing Liévin to finish the confidential communication which he had once begun to make as to the birth of the beloved captive. The Fleming's only reply, when questioned by Terne, had

been that he was interested in the daughter of Blanche-Barbe merely because she had been born at Liége ; and that, he said, was all he knew about his young fellow-countrywoman. He mingled, however, with these statements curses upon the Regent and the landlord of the Epée de Bois, and lamentations as to the fatality which weighed upon the house of Horn ; and his confused mutterings gave the chevalier a deal of cause for reflection. But he did not clearly explain himself, and Terne realising that he would learn nothing, at least for the time being, at last gave up questioning him at all. On the fifteenth day they crossed the forest of Hardouinais, at three leagues from Saint-Méen, and all was agreed upon between the travellers in view of the meeting which would soon occur.

They went on at a trot, and very suddenly came upon an unexpected sight, that of the cart itself sunk in a marshy hollow, and the police-agents trying to draw it out of the hole.

At the first glance the chevalier saw with inexpressible satisfaction that no horse-police were in the party. There were only the half-dozen bowmen who had formed the escort when starting, some trying to pull the horses out of the rut, and others pushing at the wheels. A single rider, evidently at the head of these men, was prancing around the party, and loudly finding fault with his subalterns. As soon as this important personage saw the travellers, he put spurs to his horse and rode up to them, shouting with all his might : "Here ! here ! help us, if you please !"

The chevalier was too much agitated to reply to this man, the sight of whom filled him with disgust. Gudule looked only at the waggon, trying to catch sight of Violet. Liévin, less troubled, and more on the alert, made haste to reply to the sergeant : "Coming, comrade, coming !" And he urged on his horse, saying in a low tone to Terne : "Keep cool, chevalier, this is a good chance for us to come up."

In a few seconds the Fleming found himself face to face with Argenson's hireling, and said to him, laughingly : "Oho ! we have come just in time, it seems. What a bad hole ! The wheels are up to the axle ; but that is because your cart is so full. Twelve women at the least ! Where the deuce are you taking such a flock as that ?"

"To Brest, my friend, by order of the lieutenant of police, who commissioned me to do so," replied the police-agent, with a majestic air. "But that is not the question. Will you help us ?"

"I will help you, of course, for I have strong arms ; but my master cannot leave his young sister."

"Ah, that long-legged fellow is your master, is he ?"

"What do you mean ? he is the son of the richest merchant of the Lombard district in Paris, a man that——"

"All right ! You can tell me all that some other time. Come and push at these wheels and serve the King that way ; we will do without your master if he thinks too much of himself to give us a lift."

"I'm agreeable. But be so good as to hold my horse while I push."

"Zounds ! my friend, I think that there's no need of it now. My men have pulled so stoutly that the cart is out of the hole."

"So they have ! It is going on again, now. Well, women are not very heavy."

"That may be, my friend. But I had rather carry stones, for you have no idea what trouble I have with them. Thanks all the same for your good will."

"Well, comrade—sergeant, I mean—will you accept a drop of old brandy?"

"Of course I will. Those offers are never refused between honest people," said the police-agent, taking the gourd which Liévin held out to him. "Ah! now I feel all right!" added he, after imbibing a full bumper, "and, on my word, I needed a good drink to set me up. The clouds in this country must be salted, for I'm always thirsty here."

Terne, who was coming up slowly, arrived just in time to hear this outburst, which seemed to augur well. So thirsty a police-agent must be obliging to those who enabled him to quench his thirst. The scamp put his hand to his hat and said, with magnificent composure: "Your servant, sir, has been giving me some brandy that makes me anxious to make acquaintance with his master."

"Ah!" replied the chevalier, who would rather have broken his head than given him liquor. "It is now four days since we have been on the Brittany roads, and have met no one to speak to, and I am glad that we have met with some military men, for—"

"Yes, yes, I understand," interrupted the police-agent, "you are a merchant, and you would not like to meet robbers, at any turn, who would rifle your baggage and alarm this young lady; and in my company you run no such risk. That is clear as can be, sir. But La Rissole is not afraid of anybody! My name is La Rissole, and I have the honour to be a sergeant; I have six good fellows, well armed, under my orders, and they are quite at your service, especially if you have any more of that Armagnac brandy with you."

"Thanks, sergeant," said Terne, trying to assume a simple and grateful air, which he did not succeed in doing, however. "I would accept with all my heart if I were sure that we are going the same way, but I am going to Brest for some merchandise which has been sent to me from the West Indies, and—"

"How lucky! I am going to Brest, too, not for the same purpose, for I have a load of petticoats to ship for America, but no matter! if you like to keep along with us, and halt when we do, you will see that we are not dull company."

"Oh, very well then, sergeant, it is agreed. From this moment we will form part of your party, my sister, my servant, and myself, and if you know any good sleeping-places in this cursed country I will take care of the good cheer and try to make it satisfactory."

"Sir," said La Rissole, solemnly, "your noble conduct touches me to the heart. We will not part till we get to Brest, and, to begin, I promise you that to-night we shall stop at the entrance of Loudéac, at a certain inn where the hostess keeps a table worthy of the Olympian deities."

"That is good news, indeed, and I hope that you will take the trouble to order the supper."

"Be easy on that score, sir. I never spare any pains to oblige a gentleman like yourself; and I'll have an eye to everything. But just now, if you please, we will gallop along so as to catch up with my party, who are getting ahead. The deuce of it is that I am responsible for my merchandise, and it is fragile." Having said this, and emphasised it by a loud laugh, La Rissole spurred up his horse, and Violet's friends did the same with theirs.

Meanwhile, as regards the cart, two of the police, whip in hand, were

at the horses' heads, four others followed behind with guns on their shoulders and swords at their sides, and whistled with an air of indifference, or swore to console themselves for the hardships of the way. In the wretched vehicle which bore them along the poor creatures no longer kept themselves up as on the day when, amid the coarse jeers of the crowd, they had passed through the gateway of the *Hôpital Général*. Exhausted by the privations they had endured, and by the jolting of the cart, they remained seated, or slept pell-mell at the bottom of their ambulant prison. There was no more singing or calling out, nothing but mournful despair. Hunger and fatigue had conquered even the most rebellious. What had become of *Violet* in this hideous crowd? Her would-be rescuers asked themselves how she had fared, and the more anxiously as they could not catch sight of the poor girl, who was, no doubt, stretched out upon the boards beside her ignominious companions. As they rode on *Terne* ventured to inquire: "Excuse me, sergeant, if I ask what crime these women have committed to be exiled to America."

"Nothing, but having some trouble with the lieutenant of police. I can't speak out before the young lady, who looks as good as anybody can be; but this is what comes of having a pretty face, and being too fond of fine clothes, when you haven't a bit of money to buy them. They've all lost their good looks now, poor creatures! But there is one in the heap who is still pretty. Would you like to see her?"

"To see her!" repeated the chevalier, who could not help turning pale.

"Yes. She is worth looking at, I promise you, and I'll venture to say that, although you are a rich merchant, you have not often seen as pretty a girl as she," said the facetious *La Rissolle*, with a laugh. "Come, *Jeanneton*, show us your pretty little face," added the impudent fellow at the top of his voice.

Terne was choking with anger and grief, while *Gudule*, who was deeply moved also, but had more command over herself, and was close beside him, silently pressed his hand to encourage him to be calm. "Are you sleeping, *Jeanneton*?" resumed *La Rissolle*. "If you are, wake up! Here are some gentlemen who would like to see your handsome face."

"She is not asleep, she is weeping," said a grumbling police-agent, striking the side of the cart with his musket; "that woman is a perfect fountain, but we have all the water we want here in Brittany." At this brutal speech a form that was prostrate rose up, and a pale face showed itself; it was that of *Violet*—*Violet* changed and broken, emaciated and dishevelled, but more charming than ever, with the look of suffering in her face, for the exhaustion which had thinned her cheeks, and the feverish glow in her eyes, had but heightened her beauty. The test to which she was put by the first glimpse she caught of her friends was short and decisive. She reddened, and her lips parted as if she wished to speak; she seemed about to hold out her arms to them, but she did not speak, nor did she extend her arms. Her lips closed, her arms fell, her eyelids closed, and she sank down again. *Terne*, *Gudule*, and *Liéven*, like herself, had succeeded in controlling themselves. The trial of meeting was over. "Well, what do you say to that, sir?" demanded the sergeant, with a bantering air. "Did I praise her too much?"

"The poor young girl seems to be very weak," replied the chevalier.

"Bah! you know the journey tires them a little, but the sea air does them good; and, besides, *Jeanneton* is not so ill as you think. She is a very proud sort of girl, and does not like to be looked at. Oh, she's not

like the rest, but as gentle as a lamb, and modest and polite, too ; I sometimes think that she hardly deserves this sort of thing."

"I agree with you, sir," said Gudule, eagerly, "and I feel so sorry for her that, with your permission, I will bring her something nice to eat to-night, and try to console her a little."

"You would be doing her too much honour, mademoiselle," replied La Rissole, evidently pleased at being spoken to by a woman, "but it would pain me to refuse, and I won't do so. You shall have the key of the barn when I lock up the whole of the flock to-night, and you can go in as often as you like."

Gudule thanked him with a nod, and exchanged a quick look with the chevalier. Both were overjoyed, for they felt that Heaven was helping them, Heaven that controls kings and police-agents as well. The sergeant had evidently no suspicions, and the confidence which he placed in Violet's friends doubled their chances of success. Liévin had not heard these words of good omen, for he had ridden a little way from the others, having urged on his bay until he had come to a level with the cart. He could easily see Violet, and he looked at her very persistently and curiously. The police-agents, meantime, animated by the prospects of a good supper, urged the cart ahead and went on briskly. This caused La Rissole to exclaim that they would soon reach the *Trois Croix*, where they would stop for the night. On arriving there, Liévin came up to help Gudule to alight from her horse. "All will be well, mademoiselle," said he ; "I answer for it, and I am more at your orders than ever."

"Yvonne," said La Rissole, addressing the landlady of the inn, who now appeared, "you must cover yourself with glory to-day. I have brought company with me—this gentleman, who is fond of good cheer—and you must spare nothing to satisfy him and us, too. You shall have double the money, my girl ! Double the roasts, then, and triple the bottles."

The whole inn was soon astir, while the escort brought the cart up before the barn, a long building separated from the inn by a thrashing floor, so that the unfortunate women in the vehicle had only two steps to take to enter the place where they were to sleep. Terne and Gudule looked on at the sad sight with indescribable emotion, and had the consolation of finding that Violet's health had not given way under the privation and fatigue of the journey. She leapt lightly to the ground, and went towards her prison with the light step that belongs to youth. The joy of again finding protection after such long and cruel isolation had, no doubt, helped to restore her strength. Her friends could not speak to her in the presence of the police ; they were obliged to content themselves with exchanging rapid glances. They had scarcely time to see that a single sentinel was placed at the door of the barn. La Rissole called them in to taste some good *Anjou* wine, which the hostess had brought for them to drink while supper was being got ready. "It must be confessed," said the sergeant, drinking a glass of wine, "that the horse-police were great fools to refuse to escort us to-day on the pretext that the roads were so bad. They are missing such a meal as they will never get in the whole course of their lives, and they miss the honour of your company besides."

"Then the horse-police don't come to help you along ?" said Terne.

"No, they don't like to put themselves out, and, besides, we can do without them for the little way we have to go now. To-morrow night we shall sleep at a farm near *Gouarc* ; on the day after to-morrow at the little

town of Carhaix ; and we shall then have to get on to Huelgoat, Sizun, and Landerneau, and thence to Brest, where our troubles will be over."

Terne's joy may be imagined at hearing that at Carhaix the prisoners, instead of being shut up as usual, would pass the night outside. This would evidently be the best opportunity for attempting the rescue. The chevalier's plan, a very simple one, consisted in becoming more and more intimate with La Rissolle during the two days following, so as to win his confidence completely. Liévin, on his part, grew very friendly with the soldiers, and Gudule, who alone had access to the prisoners, was charged with the duty of telling Violet of the measures taken to deliver her, and of planning with her how to take advantage of the halt at Carhaix. While the supper at the inn was being got ready, Gudule summoned up her courage, and while the chevalier went to the stables with Liévin and La Rissolle, she ran to the barn and was admitted by the old police-agent on guard, who did so with much grumbling. Captivity breaks down the wild beast itself, and it had crushed the poor prisoners. Seated or lying upon the straw of the Breton hostess's barn, some were sleeping soundly with the heavy slumber of mere animals, overcome by fatigue, while others were voraciously devouring army bread—their sorry fare. Violet was waiting anxiously. She had gone to a corner of the barn, and in that solitary retreat, and standing upright, apart from her unworthy companions in misfortune, she waited for Gudule to come up. Both remembered, as their eyes met, their first interview in the Cul-de-sac de Venise, and the vanished happiness of the lost days of freedom brought tears to their eyes. Their hands met, but for some time neither of them ventured to speak. The first to do so was Gudule. "The head of the escort has promised me to ameliorate your sufferings and those of your companions as far as possible," said she, in a distinct tone, such as all present in the barn could not fail to hear. "This sad journey is now almost at an end, and you are nearly at Brest ; my brother and I are going by the same road, and will see that you are well treated. You shall have a good supper this evening."

Not a voice was raised to thank Gudule, nor was there a look of anything but indifference in the faces around her. These poor creatures, in whom mere animal life alone seemed to survive, were not troublesome witnesses. "Heaven be praised !" added the orphan girl, in a low tone, "we have at last been able to reach you."

"I did not expect you any more," muttered Violet.

"Did I not promise we would set you free ?"

"To set me free ? What good would that do, as I wish to die ?"

"Have you forgotten that he loves you ?" said Gudule, in an agitated tone.

"I have not forgotten it, but that is a mere dream. The frightful reality is this."

"The reality is that in three day you will be free. All has been prepared to rescue you, and Heaven, which watches over you, will bring about the opportunity which we are on the look-out for. I heard the man who is at the head of the escort say that, on the day after to-morrow, at Carhaix, his prisoners would have to sleep out of doors for want of a lodging. We shall intoxicate your escort, and you can fly with us."

"No. Fly without me yourselves. The police would pursue us if you succeeded in getting me out of their hands. They are in sufficient force, and the horse-police would join them. If we were reduced to wandering about a country unknown to us, we should infallibly be taken, and then he

would be thrown into prison, and sentenced to death. His head would fall upon the scaffold. You see that this plan of flight is a mad one, and that you had better leave me to my fate."

"The plan is his."

"Tell him that I beg of him to give it up, to go to the coast without me, and to sail for Spain. Tell him that I am resigned to my destiny, and that in leaving France I shall take away happiness enough to last me my life long, since I have seen him again."

"Do you think that he will resign himself to losing you, and can it be that you who love him can speak thus?"

"You love him, too," sighed Violet.

Gudule turned pale. She understood all. Violet was jealous: jealous because of the journey taken by the chevalier in company with the detective's daughter; jealous of the many hours which they had passed in one another's company; jealous of Gudule's happiness, for the shameful sojourn in the Hôpital Général had not degraded her; and jealous, above all, of the prospect of a future companionship of all three—Gudule, the chevalier, and herself—which she felt that she would not have the courage to endure. The orphan girl had the bravery to sacrifice herself once more. "No, I do not love him like you," said she, in a low tone; "I love him as a sister loves a brother. Should I be here if this were not so, and can you think that, in trying to get out of France with him and with you, I have any other thought than of returning to Flanders, where I was born? I am alone in the world, and have always wished to become a nun; but, before leaving the world for ever, I should be glad to know that he will live free and happy, for he protected me in my loneliness, and sustained me in my troubles, although I was but a poor, deserted creature." Gudule stopped. She felt that sobs would burst forth if she continued, and so betray at once her love for the chevalier and her understanding with Violet to those around them. She saw that this lengthy conversation was now being observed by the prisoners. However, the heroic girl had succeeded in her object.

"Thanks," said Violet, bending over and touching her cheek with her lips; "thanks, my sister, tell him that I am ready to fly with him. It is to you that I shall owe my life."

"And I," thought the orphan, "it is I who must die."

At this moment the barn door was suddenly opened, and the police-agent on guard called out, in a tipsy voice: "Mademoiselle, they are waiting for you to come to supper. And you may rejoice," said he to the prisoners, "for you will get the leavings of the table."

XVI.

THE two days that followed were not marked by any notable incident. They slept the first night at Gouarec, and on the morrow arrived in good time at Carhaix. The intimacy between Violet's friends and the police-agents went on increasing during the journey, and by the time they had reached the last sleeping-place, there was an excellent understanding between them. Gudule, through prudential motives, had abstained from visiting the captives again, and had the certainty that her visit to the barn had excited no suspicion. Liévin had entertained the bowmen with wine and song, while Terne had been dispensing his pistoles. There was a

sort of semi-intoxication kept up among the police-agents, which was highly favourable to the chevalier's projects. The bivouac at Carhaix was, very fortunately, just as La Rissolle had supposed : Gudule had a poor room on the ground floor, Terne and Liévin were lodged on the upper storey, and the escort and their leader in the stables, the prisoners remaining in the open air upon the cart, which was kept in sight, as usual, by one or two sentinels. The only thing remaining to be done, in order to profit by the chance afforded, was to make these men as intoxicated as possible. In view of this, Liévin had bought a small cask of heady Cahors wine, and a small barrel of Armagnac. The two casks, tied under the cart, and opened when needed on the road, still contained enough intoxicating liquor to make the whole guard, on horseback and afoot, as drunk as they could be. With one accord the chevalier, Gudule, and Liévin agreed upon midnight as the best time for the rescue. The prisoners, having for two days past shared in the distribution of the wine, ought, according to all appearance, to fall asleep easily. The horses, which were well cared for and well groomed, and had had a double allowance of oats that night, were all in a fit condition for a gallop. Terne had made inquiries at the inn as to the easiest way of reaching the coast. The night was clear, although the moon had not yet risen ; clear enough to enable the fugitives to find their way, but not clear enough to allow them to be seen very far off. Nothing prevented their being far away by sunrise, and before sunset they would have found a means of embarking from Douarnenez Bay.

At the very hour when they sat down at table, and all was joy and song in the hostelry, when the captive Violet felt hope spring up once more in her heart, and addressed a fervent prayer to Heaven, a troop of riders left the village of Rostrenen, which the party led by La Rissolle had quitted towards noon. They were eight in number, and went on in military order, two at the head and the rest in platoons of three. Six of them formed part of the mounted Parisian watch, usually charged with maintaining order in the streets of the capital. Called out by Larfallie in virtue of an order from the minister, they had ridden about under his orders since Easter Monday, and it was he who led them, side-by-side with Blanche-Barbe, the tavern-keeper, who had deserted his inn, the Epée de Bois. The detective, who knew the police-force well, had chosen the best horses, and the most vigorous and determined men, so that, without the invariable accidents of so long a journey, they would have gone still more quickly than they had. Larfallie's impatience and anxiety may be imagined. He often felt desirous of starting off at full speed and going over fifteen or twenty leagues, in order to be done with the race the sooner ; but prudence bade him restrain himself, for it would be sacrificing all chance of success to set out on a mad run. A horse might break his legs, or fall lame, a man might break his neck, and then the whole plan of the expedition would be unsettled. Far from gaining time, they would be exposed, on the contrary, to losing a day to get matters in order again. It would be a hundred times better to proceed methodically.

Besides, to calm his ardour, he had the satisfaction of daily news, and learned that a woman and two men were following the cart at two days' interval. One of the men was evidently La Jonquière's lieutenant, and the woman could be none other than Gudule. As they had not yet caught up with the cart, it might be hoped that he (Larfallie) would catch them in time. After ten days of almost intolerable anxiety, Larfallie, at the head of his troop, at last reached Loudéac. He learned when there that the

two riders and the woman had supped and stayed over night at the tavern of the *Trois Croix*, in company with the escort of the cart, and that all of them had started off the following morning, apparently the best friends in the world. So Terne had succeeded in joining the party with the cart, and there was not a moment to lose to reach him before he had succeeded in carrying off *Violet*. *Larfaille* inquired, and was told that the party must be at that hour at *Gouarec*, whence they would proceed to *Carhaix*, to stay there the following night. He at once resolved to come up with the fugitives on the following night and surprise them, while they were asleep, at *Carhaix*. He preferred surprising them thus asleep to meeting them upon the road, where *La Jonquière*'s lieutenant might offer resistance. *Larfaille* was desirous, above all, of not frightening *Gudule*. Once with his adopted daughter, he would succeed, he thought, in inducing her to return home with him.

The detective expected some slight resistance, perhaps even an outburst of grief, for he knew that love had to do with the matter, and he did not greatly rely upon the good sense of a girl of sixteen. But he had, according to his own belief, one decisive argument to bring forward. He imagined that to separate *Gudule* from *M. de Grandpré* it would suffice to tell her that her soft-voiced chevalier was deceiving her in the most odious manner, and was, unknown to her, simply dragging her after him to pursue a rival.

Meanwhile, *Master Pierre Blanche-Barbe*, who had, before all this, turned all his possessions, save his stock-in-trade, into money and drafts upon London banks, and who had calmly deserted his wife, *Dame Margot*, rode beside *Larfaille*, and was as meek as a lamb and as gay as a lark. He was as servile as possible as regarded *Larfaille*, very polite to the soldiers, and from morning till night sang drinking songs. All this did not prevent his companion, or rather his guardian, from treating him very haughtily and watching him very closely, as well as telling him that at the first appearance of treachery he had full power to imprison him, and that the liberty to embark for England would not be allowed him at the end of the trip if his information as to the fugitives was not verified by the full success of the expedition. To all this *Master Pierre* replied that he was sure of what he had said, and he seemed perfectly easy as to the final result of the pursuit. As they rode out of *Rostrenen* the detective, having first taken the precaution to put his pistols in his belt, so as to be able to send a bullet into the ex-tavern-keeper's head at the first suspicious movement, said to *Blanche-Barbe*: "You are aware that in an hour's time we shall be at *Carhaix*, where the people whom we are pursuing will sleep to-night."

"I hope so," growled *Blanche-Barbe*, "for I long for them to be taken."

"That is all very well; but in order to take them I shall go to work in my own way, and shall place you in sure hands when I get to the village. You will be detained by one of my men till this matter is settled, for I need some other proof of your sincerity than mere talk."

"It is time for me to give you some such proof," replied *Pierre*, without seeming annoyed.

"To convince me that you are acting with frankness," said *Larfaille*, "you must begin by telling me all you know about these people."

"I will do so. Know then that the lieutenant of *La Jonquière*, who lodged with *Master La Perrelle*, is not named *Lestang*. His real name is

Louis du Terne de Grandpré ; he served as a captain, and he says that he has a right to some title or other. Did you know also that La Jonquière and his men did not confine themselves to conspiring, but sometimes murdered people whom they wished to get rid of, and that among others they killed one of your comrades, a police-agent ?"

"Firmin Desgrais, whom they had the audacity to bring into the opera-house after having killed him with a dagger thrust !"

"I see that you know all about it," sneered Pierre.

"Did this man Grandpré lead the wretches who killed Desgrais ?" asked Larfaille, in a less certain voice. He trembled lest he should receive an affirmative reply, and hear that Gudule loved an assassin.

"Oh, no !" exclaimed Pierre ; "that was managed by the colonel's other lieutenant, the Piedmontese, Lorenzo de Mille."

"The man who was executed with Count de Horn ?" said Larfaille, too quickly to prevent Blanche-Barbe from seeing that he was surprised.

"Yes. The Italian was always ready to use his sword or knife. Fortunately, he was broken on the wheel with that other rascal, Horn, the accursed offspring of a race I execrate ! Ah ! I regret that I wasn't able to take the place of Sanson, the Paris executioner, and torture the son of the illustrious Prince de Horn, and break him on the wheel with my own hands. However," added Master Pierre, grinding his teeth, "I shall at least have the pleasure of revenging myself upon one of his blood."

"What do you mean, and to whom do you allude ?" asked the detective.

"You will understand presently. When I have told you what reason I have for hating the race to which the assassin of the old Jew, Abraham, belonged, you will not ask me why I execrate Jeanneton, or why I have resolved to pursue her to the ends of the earth, if need be, sooner than allow her to live happily with the man she loves. You are surprised, I know, that I should have so easily betrayed the conspirators whom I formerly helped, and that I should leave my house, my wife, and France, where I have lived for sixteen years, and made a fortune. Well, then, you will not be astonished any longer, for I tell you that I have sacrificed everything to revenge, and I know that you also have left everything to be revenged upon this fine gentleman who has stolen your child."

"You are mistaken," replied Larfaille, coldly ; "I am fulfilling a mission which concerns the welfare of the State, and have no personal hatred to gratify."

"But I am seconding you, not to have the honour of serving the Regent, whom I care nothing about, but to wipe out a wrong done to me. Formerly I was a gamekeeper on the estates of the Horn family, and I lived in a house in the depths of the woods at Baussignies, and was the master there. I unfortunately suddenly took it into my head to marry, in conformity with the wishes of the old Prince de Horn, who was the cause of my marrying a servant of the princess's, and I was foolish enough to fail to see his motives. I discovered, after being married for a year, that my wife was deceiving me with Prince de Horn."

"What ! did you live at the château ?"

"No ; but every day the prince rode about in the forest, and took advantage of the time when I was away at the other end of his lands to call at my house. I had suspicions only, at first, but when the girl who is now going to America was born, I had proof of my misfortune. The child was delicate and puny at her birth, and was taken with convulsions so that she seemed about to die. This was at night, and the doctor who had attended

her mother was not to return till the following day ; the village where he lived was far away from our house ; it was necessary to cross the entire length of the forest ; it was frightfully cold, and there were two feet of snow on the ground, but I set off to find the doctor, madman that I was !

“ Why regret a good action ? ” said the detective.

“ You will see how I was rewarded. The night was fearful. Well, I was not far from the village, when, at the turn of the pathway, I saw a rider coming towards me. It was Prince de Horn.” The detective made a gesture of surprise. “ Yes, Prince de Horn,” resumed Master Pierre, bitterly. “ On catching sight of him, I hid behind an oak tree ; he passed near me without seeing me, and I let him go without showing myself. Then it came into my mind to ascertain whether he was going to my house by a roundabout path, but I remembered the child that was dying, and went towards Baussignies.”

“ That was noble on your part, master ! ”

“ No, it was wrong. An hour after I got to the village, awoke the doctor, and by dint of prayers and threats I made him go with me. He was mounted on a mule, and I was afoot, and yet he could scarcely keep up with me. My head was on fire. At last I reached the place where I had left my wife and child. I helped the physician to alight from his mule, for I saw that he was half-frozen ; I urged him on into the house, and I went to place his mule under a shed. I had not taken ten steps when I found myself face to face with the prince.”

“ But that is impossible ! you told me that when you met him in the forest he was not going towards your house ; you must have been in a state of excitement that blinded your eyes.”

“ No, I was quite calm again at that moment, and I clearly saw Philippe-Emanuel, the unworthy head of the house of Horn. Ah ! this time I did not doubt his infamy, and I ran towards him with my stick raised, but the scoundrel saw me, put spurs to his horse, and vanished into the wood. I only had time to see that he was bending over his saddle, as though to conceal something which he was carrying away. I was afoot, and could not hope to catch up with him. I went into the house, and the first thing I saw was the physician holding the child in his arms, and showing it to its mother. The infant was smiling. ‘ Dame Margot,’ said the doctor, with vexation, ‘ you must be out of your mind ; this child has never been ill, and it was not worth while to send your husband to bring me here and make me ride four leagues in the snow.’ But Margot did not reply ; she was tossing about and rolling her eyes in the wildest manner ; she was delirious. As for the child, its cries and convulsions had ceased, and its colour and strength had returned. It was undoubtedly the sight of its father that had cured it ; see what it is to have noble blood in your veins ! Well, I foresaw the future ; this girl who was to bear my name would be sought for, taken away, and brought up at the château at the first pretext that offered itself, and afterwards married, after receiving a dowry from the prince ; but I swore that this should not be. My first thought was to kill both the mother and the child ; then I said to myself that death would not be punishment enough for the crime committed, and that it would be better to let them live, and torture them at my ease.”

“ That was an abominable purpose ! ”

“ No, it was only just, and if I had entertained a doubt it must have vanished. Until Margot was able to leave her bed the prince did not fail to appear every day, and from the way in which he kissed the babe in the

cradle no one could mistake the true cause of his tenderness. Well, as soon as Margot was able to rise, I forced her to get on a horse with her child, and to follow me to Paris. I had all I possessed in a valise, with a considerable sum of money which I had at one time inherited. I bought the house and inn of the Epée-de-Bois, and have done a brisk business there for sixteen years, and I have revenged myself besides, and delighted in doing so."

"I understand," replied Larfaille, indignantly; "I understand that for sixteen years you have been persecuting an innocent child, and that you wish to pursue her to the ends of the earth to torment her still more."

"I confess that I did not expect to hear an agent of the King take the part of a girl from the Hôpital-Général."

"Stop your jokes, and remember that you are at my mercy! It depends upon me to put you in prison when I get to Brest, and if I choose to send you to Paris, you may end some fine day on the Place de Grève, like the unfortunate Count de Horn, who had much less to do than yourself with La Jonquière's conspiracy."

"You will not do that," stammered Blanche-Barbe. "I have your word. Besides, after what I have told you, can you doubt my good faith?"

"I do not doubt your wish to revenge yourself, but I think that if I do not prevent you, you will carry it too far. Remember one thing: I will not allow a hair of the unfortunate girl whom you persecute to be touched. It is you who have brought her where she now is, and, mark this, if you attempt to harm her, I will deal out full justice to you, and at once."

"You will not have that trouble," replied Blanche-Barbe, shrugging his shoulders. "I have not changed my system, and I have no intention of attempting Jeanneton's precious life, for I know how she will suffer on the banks of the Mississippi."

Larfaille made a gesture of disgust. This cold ferocity aroused his indignation. "That is enough," said he, contemptuously. "I know now all that I wished to know, and you need not speak to me again. I cannot say that your information has not been correct until now, nor that you have betrayed me. I will, therefore, keep my promise, and in a few days will let you embark for England. But consider yourself my prisoner till I part with you."

"This is an order, and I obey," replied Pierre, with a mocking air. "I may perhaps remind you, though, that however near we may be to our people, we have not caught them yet, and my advice may be useful."

"What do you mean?"

"If we fail to catch our party at Carhaix, I know where they'll go. M. du Terne de Grandpré will try to join La Jonquière as soon as he secures possession of the young girl."

"Where is La Jonquière, then?"

"That is my secret," quietly replied Master Pierre, "and I intend to keep it. All I'll say is that Terne and La Jonquière will embark from a Breton port on a Spanish ship."

"Ah! you are becoming rebellious, it appears."

"Not at all. But I wish to have some security. You do not seem to have the best of intentions as regards me. I am taking my precautions in case you should wish to take advantage of the situation."

Larfaille bit his lip and said nothing. He saw that he had a cunning

rascal to deal with, and that it was better, for the time, to proceed quietly and wait till another occasion to punish him for his trickery. The little troop had gone on rapidly while Blanche-Barbe was relating his story, and they came to the foot of the heights above the little river of Hière. Carhaix stands upon the summit of this slope, and, although the night was dark, the high square tower of the college of Saint-Trémeur was distinctly visible. The detective knew that the inn where the party intended to stop was situated upon the Hière at the entrance of the Faubourg de Ploguer. He began by telling his soldiers to keep their eyes upon Master Pierre and to seize him if he attempted to escape. Then he distributed the rest of his troop into two platoons, which were to occupy, each on its own part, the issues of a little esplanade which stretched out before the inn, an old dilapidated building of which the battered roof was now visible. Then Larfaillé, with many precautions, made his way towards the half-ruined hostelry. He did not wish to awaken everybody at once, but to speak to one of the bowmen in a quiet manner and inform him of his office as a police-agent, and order him to take him to his chief, La Rissolé. He soon discovered that the two sentinels set apart for watching the cart were so thoroughly intoxicated that they lay like logs beside it. Seizing one of them by the arm he shook him so roughly that he succeeded in rousing him and making him stand-up. "What's the matter?" growled the fellow, rubbing his eyes. "Are they going to open another cask of Armagnac?"

"I am in the King's service," said Larfaillé. "Where's your sergeant?"

"Asleep in the inn down there."

"And the rider who was travelling with a young woman, and who joined your party?"

"Both are asleep, too."

"Well, take me to the young woman," said Larfaillé.

"The deuce!" muttered the soldier, "I—I don't know where to find her. I didn't take supper with her, you see, although I had my share of the drink. Oh! the young merchant did things grandly, and I had my half-dozen bottles, so I did!"

"That's easy to see, for you are as drunk as you can be, and deserve to have your pay cut off."

"Drunk! I! Never, officer, never! It takes a full dozen to get the better of me."

"Let us finish, I have no time to lose. You must know where the young person's room is. Take me there at once or you'll be sorry!"

"Her room? Wait! We'll find it. I will take you to the sergeant. I shall have no trouble in finding him."

"Where is he?"

"Under the table, for certain."

At this announcement Larfaillé uttered a frightful oath. "Ah! the scoundrel!" muttered he between his teeth. "Come!" added he, taking the guard by the collar, "come, walk straight, or you shall be hanged!"

The man made no resistance, but led Larfaillé towards the inn, pushed open a worm-eaten door, and said: "This is the place."

Under a bench lay La Rissolé, sound asleep. The remnants of a feast were scattered about the room. On being kicked by Larfaillé the sergeant sat up, opened his eyes, and finally replied to the detective's statement that he was in the King's service: "Well, what does the King want with me?"

"Where are the travellers whom you were so imprudent as to become acquainted with on the road?"

"What, the merchant and his sister? Oh, they can't stand much wine. The little one did not even sit down with us to-night, and her brother went off after the first few bumpers. They must be sleeping the sleep of the innocent." Then, after looking about him, the drunken man added: "Oho! their servant has made off, too! He can empty pitchers pretty well, though, that fellow, and I cannot imagine why——"

"Stop your nonsense!" said Larfaille, imperiously; "show me the rooms they went to."

"Oh, they're over there," said La Rissole, pointing to an open doorway.

"You lie! there's no one there," said Larfaille, after going towards this doorway.

"Well, where the devil have they gone? Oh, yes! they must be out walking on the esplanade. The girl must be about; she'll talk to you if you want to know anything about them."

Larfaille had already run up a flight of stairs. The window of a loft at the top was open, and a rope-ladder hung from it. There could be no further doubt. The fugitives must have fled that way. The detective did not stop to reflect, but rushed into the lower room, exclaiming: "You scoundrel! you have let them escape!"

"Who? My prisoners? Never! I'll answer for that."

"Come to the cart, then, you brute." And rushing towards the exit, Larfaille ran against a lad belonging to the inn who had a lighted lantern, which he snatched hold of. Then darting to the place where the prisoners slept, he looked in. Violet was not among them. The light made one of the girls open her eyes. "The bird has flown, my lad!" said she, and she laughed with a tipsy snicker; "her good friend came for her, and they are off and away, and far off, too, if they are still riding on."

Larfaille uttered a cry of rage, and jumped from the cart-wheel to the esplanade, where he found himself face to face with La Rissole, whom he caught by the throat, howling: "She's gone, you good-for-nothing scamp! They've carried her off. As for you, your account is settled, and you shall go to the galley's." Then, after thinking a moment: "Where is the stable?" he demanded. The sergeant led him to it, and Larfaille saw that his conjectures were correct, for the stable was empty.

"By Satan!" exclaimed the sergeant, "they have taken my horse, too!" and the extent of his misfortune sobered him at once. Then he rushed to a shed next to the stable, where he began to wake up his men by beating them with the sheath of his sword. An indescribable tumult arose among the drunken party, above which suddenly sounded Larfaille's sharp whistle, and at this the riders posted about came up all at once, including Blanche-Barbe and the man who guarded him, pistol in hand. "Come down!" called out the detective to Master Pierre, who at once obeyed. Larfaille seized him by the arm, dragged him a few paces from the group, and said in a clear and commanding tone: "We have come too late! They have rescued your wife's daughter, and they have fled with her. Will you tell me the colonel's secret now?"

Blanche-Barbe uttered a roar of rage. "Will I?" shouted he. "I would give up La Jonquière and all his gang to you rather than renounce my revenge. I cannot, unfortunately, remember more than two words that the colonel often uttered in my presence: the name of the port whence he intends to embark, 'Morgat'; and the name of a mill in which he will hide while he waits for a ship which is cruising about—it is 'Ploéven.'"

"Good," said Larfaille, coldly, "we shall set out in pursuit of them, you will ride beside me, and if I find that you are deceiving me, I will kill you." Then, turning to La Rissolle, he said: "There is but one way for you to escape the rope that you deserve to hang by, and that is to find me a guide who knows the country well."

The unlucky sergeant scratched his ear, but the boy with the lantern, who had overheard the talk, came up cap in hand, and said: "I can guide you, sir! Take me up behind you, and we shall soon find the fugitives."

"Bring me my horse!" called out Larfaille, and five minutes later the eight riders galloped rapidly out of Carhaix.

XVII.

DAWN had just come, and the sky was slowly clearing—a dull grey Breton sky heavy with clouds. The west wind drove along the mist which rose above the soil, and blew it towards France. The quick trot of four horses passing by—the horses of the fugitives—did not awaken the slightest echo, so soft was the earth beneath their hoofs. Violet and her friends glided along like phantoms through the protecting fog; for Violet had indeed been set free, and, three hours before Larfaille entered Carhaix at the head of his troop, she had left it, mounted upon the mare belonging to the careless La Rissolle. The ingenious idea of appropriating the sergeant's horse was due to Liévin. He had taken advantage of the police-agent's drunken sleep to quietly untie the animal, which stood at the manger side-by-side with Terne's chestnut, and had carried his foresight so far as to take from the stable an old side-saddle which had been forgotten by some castellan's lady of the neighbourhood. This was a great point, and averted the necessity of taking up Violet behind, for it was well to remember that they might be followed. The flight had been effected under the most favourable conditions, and they had, without impediment, passed the last houses in Carhaix. There the difficulties began. It was necessary to make no mistake in the route they took. By dint of cudgelling his brains, Terne had remembered that when La Jonquière bade him good-bye on the evening when he had seen him for the last time, he had spoken of the Bay of Morgat, and Cape La Chèvre. He had said that there was a Spanish caravel cruising about, ready to take him to the Bay of Biscay. No doubt La Jonquière, who had left Paris five or six days before his lieutenant, was already sailing in the Gulf of Gascony, and there was no chance of joining him; but it might be supposed that the coast on which his Spanish friends awaited him, offered facilities for embarking which could not be met with elsewhere. They ought, perhaps, not even to despair of finding some secret friends of the colonel thereabouts, who, judging of the travellers by their appearance, would offer to take them to foreign parts. Terne, therefore, completely posted himself as to this most desirable of capes, and as to the bay also. He learnt that they must be sought for almost at the end of the peninsula of Camaret, a narrow tract separating the Bay of Douarnenez from the shore of Brest. He found out, besides, that the shortest route thither was by Pleyben, the Aune River, and Crozen, an important village near the little haven of Morgat.

During the first few hours after leaving Carhaix they went rapidly on,

in order to gain ground, and leave as wide a distance as possible between the enemy and themselves. They succeeded so well in this, that by day-break they had passed Pleyben, and were not far from the valley at the bottom of which flowed the Aune. The chevalier was at the head of the party, and the two young girls rode along, side-by-side, while Liévin remained behind as a kind of rear guard. At about five, when dawn was near, Terne thought that they might slacken their pace, which had been so rapid. Violet, moreover, had borne the fatigue of the terrible ride with courage, but she now seemed exhausted. Her unbound hair was lashing her cheeks, which had turned to a bluish pallor from the cold, and her slender form was bent over the saddle. Gudule, on the contrary, did not seem to have suffered or to be weak. It seemed as though her energy rose to the occasion, and that she was born for a life of adventure. At the moment when Terne, holding in his horse, came up to the two young girls, the orphan took off her mantle to cover Violet, who was shaking with cold. "Do you hear?" suddenly said Liévin, who had just come up to the group. "One would swear that somebody was galloping behind us." All stopped. "I am sure of it now," resumed the Fleming; "they are riders, and are coming at full speed." "We are pursued!" muttered Terne. "By whom? Our friend La Rissole is not able to stand, any more than his soldiers, and is sleeping off his potations in the lower room." "No matter, let us go on." They again started at a trot, and came to a summit from which they could see all around them for a considerable distance. They halted there, and Liévin alighted, put his ear to the ground, and listened. "There are six at least, perhaps ten," said he, after a moment or two; "they are galloping in order like a squadron of gendarmes, and at the rate at which they are coming they will be here in a quarter of an hour."

"But they cannot be after us," exclaimed Terne; "it is impossible that the bowmen should be already at our heels even though the fiend had sent them horses to ride after us. It must be some gentleman hunting with his friends."

"But they would not be hunting on the high-road, nor before sunrise."

"I see them," said Gudule, pointing towards the plains. A breeze had cleared the fog away, and upon the road, far off, there was a group of riders tearing along at the utmost speed. Liévin remounted at once.

"Forward!" cried Terne; "we may yet escape them!" While he was giving his little party the order to fly, Gudule seized the bridle of Violet's horse, and made it keep pace with hers. The chevalier and Liévin came up, and placed themselves on either side of the two young girls, and they set out at full speed. But after they had passed the summit of the hill, they could hear shouts in the plains below. This shouting was of ill omen, for it told them that the enemy had caught sight of them. It is true that they were soon out of sight again, owing to the inequalities of the soil, but they had been seen, and that settled the question as to the continuance of the pursuit. There could be no doubt that the riders were pursuing them. Whether they belonged to the horse-police, warned of their flight, and sent after them by La Rissole, or were simply the men of the escort on borrowed horses, it was evident that they were following the escaped prisoner. Terne, it should be mentioned, was far from thinking of Larfaille, and still less of Blanche-Barbe. The little party went down the hill as swiftly as possible, flew like the wind across a flat open meadow at the bottom of the hill, and went up another slope without slackening speed. At the top Terne, turning round in his saddle, had the satisfaction

of finding that the enemy did not appear as yet at the point where they had halted a moment before. It was evident that he had gained ground. The race began again more furiously than before. They were galloping in a close platoon, the men bent over the horses' necks, the women clutching the pommels of their saddles, the horses covered with foam, and with steaming nostrils. A second lost or a false movement might bring about a disaster. They did nothing for a time but go up and down. But the general tendency of the soil towards a final depression became more decided, and it was evident that they were now near the river which had to be forded. This would momentarily delay the flight of the pursued party; but when they had once crossed it, Terne hoped that they would be able to conceal themselves more easily, for beyond the Aune the country seemed to be rather woody. They had been going on thus for about ten minutes, when they saw at five hundred paces from them that a water-course stopped the way. Excited by this discovery, the chevalier rode on more swiftly, and they went down a steep declivity at a frightful rate, but without any mishap. However, unfortunately—Liévin discovered this—Violet's horse was now breathing in an alarming manner. The Fleming struck the animal with a switch, but after plunging forward, the poor beast began to paw about, and finally stopped still. Terne saw that it was completely foundered, and that it could not go on. However, Gudule, with incredible presence of mind, leapt down, caught Violet in her arms, helped her to get on the grey mare, remounted herself, then spurred up her steed, and bore off with her the rival whom for the second time she had saved. All this was done before the chevalier had time to interfere. Still, it had taken up precious moments, for the noise of the enemy's horses was again heard by the fugitives. The foe could not be seen, but sounds reached the party which indicated that they were tearing along up the hill. It was necessary now to cross the river before they were caught sight of. Terne thought that when the pursuers found La Rissole's horse deserted upon the road they would stop for an instant, and relax their pursuit. He then hoped to succeed in crossing the Aune quickly enough to hide in the woods visible on the left shore; but this hope soon fled, for on approaching the ford he saw that this seeming wood consisted of only a few willows and ash-trees, beyond which there extended a vast heath. "What shall we do?" demanded Liévin.

"Die!" replied the chevalier—"die for those who are with us! We will cross the river, and Violet and Gudule must fly while we await those scoundrels and charge at them. We shall be overcome, I know, but we shall at least have the satisfaction of killing some of them, and we will keep the others busy while the women have time to fly."

"I survive you!" exclaimed Violet; "you well know that I will not consent to do so."

"What good would it do us to fly?" said Gudule. "Better perish with you!"

"No, no," said Terne, eagerly, "if you love me listen to my last prayer. Fly, I tell you! fly! It is impossible that you should fail to find some cottagers who will take you in, and conceal you. You must tell them that you are flying from the persecutions of Dubois. His name is execrated in this province. These Bretons will not refuse to give you asylum."

"Well, sir," said Liévin, "we must decide at once. In two minutes it will be too late." As he spoke, the brave Fleming drew his sword and took a pistol from the holster. He did not find fault with fate or try to

bargain for his life, but made up his mind to sell it dearly. Violet clutched Gudule's waist, bent her head, and laid it upon the shoulder of the courageous girl, who remained upright and firm in her saddle, despite the coming danger. This scene took place at the entrance to the ford. In a few moments more the riders in pursuit would appear at the top of the hill overlooking the valley. The river, wide and deep at this point, narrowed a little below, and was then shut in between two abrupt shores. There the current grew more rapid, as the stream became narrower and turned, after making a very decided bend. The day had fully dawned now, but the sky was covered with heavy black clouds, which sunk lower and lower. The murmur of water, the still distant sound of the enemy's horses, was all that could be heard. The gloomy spot seemed made to be the scene of a final and bloody struggle. Terne also now made ready to fight, but Gudule stopped him, saying: "Heaven has sent me a happy thought."

Then, urging her horse into the river, instead of crossing it, she let herself go with the tide. The chevalier and Liévin did the same without knowing whither she was leading them. It was time they acted thus. Larfaille and his soldiers were reaching the summit of the hill at the very moment when the fugitives disappeared behind the bank at the bend of the river. The horses, borne on by the current, had lost footing, for the deep and rapid waters bore them on between two steep shores; but they all swam bravely, and the robust Percheron mare, carrying the two young girls, did not seem to feel their light weight. Terne had been a soldier, Liévin had often hunted with his master, and this ride through the water was mere amusement to them. They let themselves go, and a few moments later were already far from the ford. The chevalier understood Gudule's idea. An inspiration indeed had come to the young girl. The enemy, encouraged by finding the foundered horse, would continue their furious chase, and pass the Aune at full speed, without knowing that its protecting waves hid those whom they pursued. Once upon the plain beyond the river, there was no reason why they should stop. It might even be hoped they would gallop on thus to the sea-shore, and, if so, Violet and her friends would be rid of their persecutors, perhaps, for ever.

Larfaille, leading Blanche-Barbe and the soldiers of the watch, was all the more easily led into the trap from the fact that the lad from Carhaix, who served him as a guide, declared that beyond the ford the road was flat to the entrance of the peninsula, and that they would surely catch the flying party at the foot of Méné-Hom, the highest and steepest of the chain of the Montagnes Noires. But, while the pursuers were galloping across the plain, Violet and her friends were going down the river, borne on by the current, and not knowing when or where they would be able to land. They were swimming between two walls of granite, covered with foliage and vines, and there was no hold for the horses' hoofs. Long willows swept into the water, and it was difficult to avoid their heavy branches. Fortunately, at a turn in the river, the shore began to grow lower, and Gudule was the first to perceive and point out a spot on the left where it seemed possible to land. It was a kind of miniature cape jutting out into the river. Liévin took the reins of the mare which bore the young girls and drew her carefully towards his steed, while, on his side, the chevalier kept close to them. This manœuvre proved successful. A few instants sufficed to enable them all to land upon a narrow strip of soil. Terne at once went up the slope to see what there was above, while Liévin was helping Gudule and Violet to dismount. The two poor

girls, wet to the skin, were shivering with cold, and it was time that their stay in the waters should cease, for they could not have endured it many moments more. When they reached the top of the declivity which overhung the river, the chevalier perceived that chance had led them to the foot of a thicket of large trees. This was a fortunate shelter from a surprise. The sky had changed, and a fog having gathered little by little, now extended like a grey pall over the two shores. It was impossible to see twenty yards ahead. They all entered the woods, and the first few moments were given up to very natural transports of joy. Then Gudule declared that she was exhausted, that Violet, too, was not able to keep up, and that they must sleep, if only for two or three hours. This wish was natural enough after so many emotions and dangers. The men, too, were weary, and they asked nothing better than to rest; besides, they realised the necessity of advising together before going any further.

Liévin, ever full of resources, made a kind of bed for the young girls with the cloaks, saddles, and horse-blankets. He would have been glad to light a fire, but feared to attract attention by the smoke that would thus arise. Gudule and Violet were therefore obliged to dry their clothing as best they might, and stretched themselves side-by-side upon the cloak which Terne removed from his shoulders. A few moments later they had fallen into a deep sleep. When Terne and Liévin found themselves alone, they consulted in a low tone as to the best course to follow. The impossibility of going any further at the moment was evident. The horses had been quite over-taxed. It was agreed then that, during the day, the two men should take turns in keeping watch, and Liévin began at once to do so. Terne bade him awake him at noon, and looked for a distant corner where he could sleep in peace. He found what he sought at twenty paces from the clearing where the Fleming was watching the horses and the sleeping girls. It would have been imprudent to go further, but the fog thickened more and more. The spot chosen by the chevalier was very comfortable. There was a bank of turf to sit upon, and the trunk of an oak to lean against.

Terne meant to sleep "with one eye open," as the saying goes. He wished to be ready in case of an alarm, and did not even unfasten his sword-belt. Sleep came to him not so deep at first as he could have wished. He sometimes started and put his hand to his sword to draw it and attack an imaginary enemy. This agitation eventually ceased, and the chevalier sank into a deeper slumber. He was suddenly awakened by a feeling of oppression, and before he knew where he was, a man rolled over him and seized him by the throat to strangle him. Terne resisted, and his assailant was in a disadvantageous position, for, after a somersault, he found himself under the chevalier. However, he had a very long, sharp knife in his hand, and would certainly have thrust it into the chevalier's back had not the faces of the two men, in the nick of time, as it were, come within a couple of inches of one another. "The colonel!" exclaimed Terne.

"My lieutenant!" replied La Jonquière, in a powerful voice. And they let go each other at the same moment. "Upon my word," exclaimed the colonel, "you did well to let me see your face, for I was going to stab you, and I should never have consoled myself had I done so."

"Nor I!" laughed the chevalier; "but, in the name of all that is sensible, where did you fall from like that?"

"From the top of that tree, which I had climbed to scan the country."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Why do you ask, after my telling you my plans down there, at the end of the Pont Neuf? I have come here to get to Spain, of course. But what are *you* doing here? If I can guess it I wish that Beelzebub may——"

"Like you," interrupted Terne, "I am trying to get out of France."

"And you remembered somewhat late in the day the advice I gave you to reach Brittany. Never mind! I have no ill-will against you for that, and I am delighted to see you again. Then you have given up your little love affair, and let your little flower-girl go?" added La Jonquière, with a mocking air.

"No; it was in order to free her that I undertook this journey."

"Explain yourself, chevalier. I thought that she had been carried off."

"So she was, and I found her. Dubois and the 'Ace of Hearts' had thrown her into the Hôpital-Général; they completed their villainy by giving orders that she should be taken to Brest and on to America."

"Ah! I see! You came after her, like the giddy pate you are. You're incorrigible." The astonishment of La Jonquière when the chevalier informed him that Violet and the daughter of Larfaille, the detective, were sleeping upon the turf a few yards off, may be imagined. The story of the deliverance was then told, and, after this, Liévin was brought forward and introduced to La Jonquière, who, after declaring that the chevalier was mad, and the Fleming a fool to have followed him in so hazardous a journey, ended by saying that he would not desert an old comrade, and that Terne should share his (the colonel's) fortunes for the future, good or bad as they might be. "You can be useful to me, besides," added he, "for I am in a great dilemma. The vessel which was cruising off Cape La Chèvre was obliged to go out into the open sea on account of bad weather, and has not yet returned, so that I have taken refuge here at a certain mill the owner of which is devoted to me."

"That is very fortunate, for those who are pursuing us are going towards the port where you intended to embark."

"Then the eight riders whom I caught sight of are in pursuit of you, are they? I saw them from the top of that tree, and they are going towards the mountains. I saw you below, and, thinking you a laggard belonging to the same troop, I attacked you. Who are these people?"

"I do not know; it looks as though they were sent after us by the head of the convoy, for this man, furious at the escape of Violet——"

"Is doing all that he can to catch her again. Well, Terne, I should prefer not to have the petticoated party along with you; but I can see that you cannot now get rid of them, and so you shall come with me. I will take you all, women included."

"I expected no less of you, colonel; but I shall never forget what you are now doing for me——"

"No thanks needed," interrupted La Jonquière. "Let us make haste and clear up a point which greatly interests me. Those riders, no doubt, know what direction you meant to take, as they so nearly caught you. Have you ever spoken of Morgat to them?"

"No, as I do not exactly know who they are. But I have asked for the road to Morgat at the inns at which we have stopped."

"That is enough; but you said no more, mentioned no other name?"

"I only knew that. It is a miracle that I remembered it, for I only heard you allude to it once, and that was when you bade me good-bye on the Quai des Augustins."

"You never asked where the mill of Ploéven was to be found?"

“Never, for I did not know such a mill was in existence.”

“Good! we are saved, then, and it is very fortunate that you talked of Morgat, for the mounted police will not fail to go there to wait for you to come up, and while they are watching over the bay and Cape La Chèvre, we can quietly embark at the end of Ploéven river. You have, without knowing it, my dear chevalier, brought about what we call a diversion in warfare, and we shall know how to take advantage of the fact. You must by-and-by get rid of your horses, which will be of no further use to us.”

“What next?”

“Well, the execution of the two Breton noblemen at Nantes, last month, of which you have heard, has greatly modified the zeal of our partisans hereabouts. Our agent at Morgat let me know that he was suspected and watched, and consequently not in a position to give me an asylum. I then came down upon my friend Daoulas, the miller, who, before he came to Ploéven, served under my orders in Spain, and will be faithful unto death. For six days past, ever since I have been at the mill, his two sons have been cruising with their bark off Cape La Chèvre, waiting for the Spanish vessel, and in readiness to let the captain know that I am here as soon as they can hail it. They will come to look for me at Ploéven as soon as they have talked to the captain. The mill is on the banks of a little river, nearly a league from the place where it meets the sea, and where their boat will take us to the caravel.”

“Colonel, you are saving my life, and my gratitude will——”

“You can say all that when you are in safety under the Spanish flag. Let us now try to reach Ploéven. We can easily cross in the fog without being seen. Saddle the horses, wake the women, and let us be off!”

Gudule remembered having seen the colonel at Terne’s lodgings in La Perrelle’s house, and she knew that he had preceded them to Brittany. Although not naturally courteous to women, La Jonquière made an effort to be so on this occasion, and was almost gracious. He even carried his condescension so far as to assure Gudule that he was greatly obliged to her for the services she had formerly rendered to the conspirators. The order of march was now changed, inasmuch as Terne gave up his horse to Violet, and walked with the colonel at the head of the party. The fugitives, after their swim, had landed on the left bank. They were, therefore, not obliged to cross the Aune, which went to the northward, whereas they were going to the south-west. La Jonquière found a path which led to the chain of the Montagnes Noires, that granite range which divides the Armorican peninsula in two parts. “Here we can see the sea when the sky is clear,” said he, as they reached the summit. “We have only to go down to the mill, and shall be there in an hour’s time.” La Jonquière had calculated correctly, and the end of the journey was as quiet as the beginning had been troubled. Toward noon, at the moment when the fog cleared, the little party reached the banks of a water-course which was shut in entirely on all sides. “We have reached the place now,” said the colonel; “here is a shed under which we can tie our horses, for my friend Daoulas’s mill is on the opposite bank, and can only be reached on foot.”

“What, must we swim over?” asked Liévin.

“No, my good fellow; don’t be alarmed, there is a bridge,” replied La Jonquière, and a special bridge, too.”

As though to facilitate the colonel’s explanation, the fog was clearing off, and the fugitives could soon see the strange spot which they had now reached. The river, narrow but swift and deep, ran at their feet three

fathoms below. In front of them, on the opposite shore, rose a vertical rock, against which stood the mill, a wretched structure in boards on pile-planking. By a foot-bridge made of joists badly hewn it could be reached. This bridge, which did not look tempting, had no railings, but was open on all sides. "You see," said La Jonquière, "this mill is an inaccessible fortress, protected on one side by the river, and on the other by a granite wall fifty feet high. This bridge is the only practicable way of getting to it, and I will show you how you can let it down into the water in an instant, with all who may be upon it. The enemy has no resource but to attack from here, for a projection of the rock overhangs the house, and shelters it from any projectile hurled from above."

"Is nothing ever ground in your mill?" asked Liévin, timidly.

"My lad," replied the colonel, with a mocking air, "Daoulas does an excellent business. But he has accustomed the country yokels hereabouts to bring their sacks to a shed out there, and to take them from that spot when the flour is put in them. His lads, too, go to fetch the corn with their boat and bring it here, where it is hauled up by a pulley. You see that I am entirely in retirement, and that there is no reason to fear being surprised. But we are losing time here, and our travellers will get chilled; the horses are tied up under the shed, I see."

"Yes, colonel, there is some hay in the racking and oats in the crib."

"Very well. You need not take off the saddles, as we may need them presently. The weather is clear, and I should not be surprised if our sailors returned to-day to wait for me near the mouth of the stream. In that event we should at once cross the bridge again, mount on horseback with our young companions behind us, and in double-quick time reach the Pointe-de-Tréfuntec, where the boat would be waiting for us. We should get on board, leaving the three animals with their harness as part payment to Daoulas for his hospitality, and then, off we sail! In less than two hours we should be safe and sound on board of the *Santa Cecilia*, commanded by Don Jaime Ochotorena, a hidalgo of Biscay, and a very intimate friend of mine."

"Heaven grant it may be so, colonel!"

"Meanwhile let us cross the draw-bridge and shut ourselves up."

La Jonquière, setting the example, stepped upon the bridge, followed by Terne, who was sustaining the two young girls. Liévin, laden with the baggage, brought up the rear. From the bridge the fugitives could see that the river made a bend a little lower down, and that below the mill it was divided into two parts; a wall, parallel with the stream, forming a distinct passage, only four fathoms in width, by which the water that turned the wheel entered. A transversal dam divided the rest of the stream, and according as the paddles were raised or lowered the water mainly stopped here or else it went below. At the moment when the little party entered the colonel's new lodging, the paddles were raised, and the mill was at work, although the miller was away. They went in by the only opening in the front, one which admitted the beams of the foot-bridge, and which also served for the narrow logs which were used when the doors of the sluice were open. The party now found themselves in a somewhat extensive room, in which corn sacks, piled up, served as seats, supplementing three stools set around a long table. This table was covered with provisions—of a huge salmon, a venison patty, equally monstrous, of which La Jonquière had only demolished half, and a regiment of bottles in a line. A ladder led up to a trap-door, by which

one reached an upper storey reserved for storing grain. Below was the mill proper, that is to say, the grindstones, bolter, and other apparatus. "My friends," exclaimed the colonel, "you must be thirsty and hungry, too, so you must eat and drink. But, before we sit down, let me explain something to you. In the first place, upon the roof up above there is a kind of lair from which one can watch the approaches to the mill; and I am going, presently, to place myself there as a sentinel, to see if I can catch sight of the signal for embarking—which is a red light at the mast-head of Daoulas's boat. Now here, too, is an iron lever, by which, if you press upon it firmly, you make the joists turn over and fling the bridge into the water. You now see that there is nothing to prevent you from enjoying this salmon, which I caught yesterday myself, and boiled. As for the bottles you see there, some came from Oporto—"

"Come to me, Liévin! this poor child is fainting!" at this point called out Terne, rushing to Gudule, who was tottering and seemed about to fall. The orphan sank into the chevalier's arms, and he, with Liévin's help, placed her upon a pile of meal-bags. When this was done, Terne saw that he could be of no further service to her, for men understand little about young girls' fainting fits. Fortunately, Violet was there. Although she had scarcely any strength left, she was able to help Gudule a little; and sending the two men away, she dexterously unfastened the young girl's riding-habit at the throat, so as to enable her to breathe more freely. As she did so a ribbon came in the way of her fingers. It was fastened about Gudule's throat, and somewhat tightly. Violet tore off this ribbon and threw it aside, with an object attached to it, which Liévin picked up. The colour now soon returned to Gudule's pale cheeks, and her eyes opened, but closed again. "Take the little one upstairs," said La Jonquière; "there is a mattress there she can lie down upon, blankets to warm her, brandy to rub her temples, and everything that she needs to bring her to her senses; and besides, her young friend will be much better able to help her when we are not there."

The advice was followed with Violet's entire approbation; and, as soon as Gudule was laid upon the mattress in the garret, she asked that they should be left to themselves. The swoon was not serious; and rest was certainly the best remedy. The three men now found themselves alone in the room below, and the colonel, looking at Liévin, asked him what ailed him. The Fleming was absorbed in contemplating the object snatched by Violet from Gudule's neck. "It is a scapular," muttered he—"a scapular worked in red on a black ground, and quite worn. I would swear that it was the same—the resemblance is too strange! I must open it to see if by chance—but no! it is impossible." Thus talking, Liévin unfastened the cords which held the scapular together, and drew forth a paper grown yellow with age. "Ah, good heavens!" cried he, as he gazed at the paper, "it is she!"

"Who may *she* be?" demanded the chevalier, impatiently.

"Read, sir, read; it is written here: 'My name is Gudule; I was born December 9th, 1703.' I placed that paper there, sixteen years ago. That's so, and I am going to speak out. Why not tell all? I have sufficiently reproached myself with having hidden such a secret from you."

"At last!" muttered Terne, breathless with emotion. He thought that he was at last about to hear something definite about Violet.

"Sir," began the old servant, "you think me a great deal better than I am. However, it is now time for me to confess to you that I have only

thus exposed myself in order to protect a young girl who has the blood of the house of Horn in her veins."

"Violet!"

"She whom you call thus is the sister of my poor master, and although she has not the right to bear her father's illustrious name, she is of his family, and I am ready to die, if need be, to save her."

"Is this indeed true?" exclaimed Terne. "Why, her mother, the wife of that odious Blanche-Barbe, often told me of what she called his *unjust* suspicions, and she declared—"

"Margot is no more her mother than Blanche-Barbe is her father."

"But what you say is senseless," exclaimed the chevalier.

"Listen to me," resumed Liévin; "you must not accuse me of falsehood or of madness, sir. In 1703 I was the squire of Philip Emmanuel, then Prince de Horn, and he was the father of Antoine Joseph. He had unlimited confidence in me, and I used to go with him and hold his horse during his secret visits to a cousin of his at the further end of the forest of Baussignies. On one occasion, in December, he did not take me with him, but ordered me to wait for him on the road to Liége. A little before day-break he came up at a gallop, having under his cloak a new-born child."

"Violet?"

"No; Violet was sleeping in a cradle beside the bed of Blanche-Barbe's wife, for this is what had taken place. Philip Emmanuel, Prince de Horn, had not hesitated to substitute one child for another. The two children were born on the same day, one under Blanche-Barbe's roof, the other clandestinely at the castle of Overiske. Violet was the prince's illegitimate daughter, and he wished to keep her near him, protect and love her. So he glided by night into the room of his gamekeeper's wife—Blanche-Barbe being out of the way, as it happened, seeking a doctor, as his wife Margot was delirious—and the prince put his daughter in the place of the forester's child, and fled with the latter little creature."

"That was a fine act for a prince to be guilty of, I must say," remarked La Jonquière, sneeringly.

"The prince handed Blanche-Barbe's child to me, and ordered me to hasten to Liége and lay it upon the steps of a church, and I was coward enough to obey him. Heaven has punished both of us. But as it pained me to the heart to abandon the poor child thus, I took upon myself to keep it during the whole of the next day at an inn which I found upon my way, and whilst there I unfastened a scapular which I had worn from my childhood, and put it around its neck. After sixteen years I have just found this scapular again. I wished that the child should be called Gudule, like the holy patroness of the city of Brussels, and I wrote that name, with the date of the child's birth, upon a paper which I enclosed in the scapular. I said to myself that the little creature would be found by some citizens of Liége, that, later on, I would make inquiries in the city and try to find it again; and that if I was able I would take care of it myself or restore it to its parents, for I felt that I was about to commit almost a crime. But I was slavishly devoted to the prince, and never dared to disobey him. The hostess of the inn where I stopped succeeded in feeding Gudule with a few drops of goat's milk. I do not remember what story I told her to account for having the child with me. At night I started off again, and reached Liége. Then I laid the child at the foot of a statue of Saint Gudule, after carefully wrapping it up so that the cold should not kill it, and I went away with a sad heart."

"It was a bad act," said La Jonquière, gravely.

"It was, indeed, colonel, and I told you just now that Heaven was just in punishing me as well as in punishing Prince de Horn. Eight days after the substitution of one child for another, the forester Blanche-Barbe, his wife, and the prince's daughter suddenly disappeared. The prince was obliged to give up all hope of recovering Violet—this was the name which he gave her—and his cousin and accomplice in the act I have spoken of died of a fever which resulted from grief and remorse. As for myself, I could never find out what had become of Gudule when I again went to Liège. Somehow, my inquiries got heard of in the country and at the château, so that Maximilian Emmanuel, now Prince de Horn, began to hate me, and swore he would have me expelled. He did not succeed so long as his father lived, but after the old prince's death he forbade me to set foot upon the estates. Antoine Joseph, his younger brother, had taken a liking to me, and their mother allowed me to enter the young captain's service. I became as much attached to him as a dog to his master, but he has just died upon the wheel, and I have only to wander upon the face of the earth till I die in some ditch. Do you not think, colonel, that I also have been punished as I deserved ?"

"So Gudule is the daughter of Blanche-Barbe and Dame Margot," muttered Terne, "and the blood of that detective does not run in her veins?"

"It is a traitor's blood that does run in her veins, however," interrupted La Jonquière ; "that rascal of an innkeeper has sold us all to the enemy. Hark ! I hear strange sounds down there on the right shore."

This conversation had taken place at the table at some distance from the aperture in the front of the mill. La Jonquière hastily repaired to this aperture, and, screened as it was by the darkness within the mill, he could, without being seen, examine the opposite bank. "I was right," he exclaimed ; "see, there is that rascally traitor, Blanche-Barbe !"

A party of riders were halting between the bridge and the shed. Some had alighted and tied their horses to the crib, beside those of the little troop of whom they were in pursuit. Others seemed to be arranging a plan of attack. All were dressed in dark coats, with large felt hats, swords at their sides, and muskets slung across their shoulders.

"I recognise the fellows," said Liévin ; "it is Blanche-Barbe, with the squad who have been tracking us since morning."

"I understand everything now," exclaimed the chevalier ; "it is Blanche-Barbe who found our track ; he has been pursuing Violet in order to capture her and torment her again. If he knew that Gndule—"

"He shall not fly to Heaven with his treachery, for I'll send him elsewhere !" growled the colonel, who, as he spoke, took a pistol from his belt, and aimed at Blanche-Barbe.

"He is the father of the girl who saved us all !" exclaimed Terne, arresting La Jonquière's arm.

The shot went off, but the bullet fell into the river. "A thousand devils ! Are you mad ?" demanded the colonel.

"Do you not see that this man's death is needless, and that nothing but stratagem can help us now ?" said Terne, quickly.

Meantime Blanche-Barbe, who had heard the ball whistle, made his horse plunge, turned, and soon regained the protecting shelter of the shed, calling out in a loud voice : "Thanks, colonel ! I salute you, chevalier ; you will hear from me presently. Kiss Jeanneton's hand for me, meantime !"

XVIII.

THERE was no longer any possibility of doubt. The pursuers, advised by Blanche-Barbe, had found out that they were on the wrong track, and, led by the boy from Carhaix, had speedily reached Ploéven.

The blockade of the mill had begun, and the capture of the fugitives was certain, unless they had wings or fins furnished to them, for the bridge being guarded on the right shore, there was no way for escape but the air or the water. La Jonquière and Terne exchanged a look, and at once retired to a corner to deliberate. Liévin already had his hand upon the ingenious apparatus which served to throw the foot-bridge into the water.

“Shall I cut off the communication?” he asked, making a pretence of working the spring.

“Not until I tell you, for goodness’ sake,” exclaimed the colonel. “I have my ideas on that subject. Just remain with one hand on the lever, and watch what these scoundrels are doing. At the first attempt they make to cross the bridge let me know, and I’ll attend to the rest.”

“Good! I understand,” said Liévin. “The whole thing will upset, and we shall be rid of them without fighting at all.”

“I am relying upon Daoulas,” resumed La Jonquière, turning to Terne; “the wind has changed, and he will bring up his boat.”

“Sir,” suddenly exclaimed Liévin, who, in obedience to his orders, was looking through a wide crack between the boards, “I see a stone hanging at the end of a rope, near my hand—there is a paper twisted round it.”

“A message from Daoulas!” exclaimed La Jonquière. “Put out your hand and catch it quickly!” Liévin did so. “Give it to me!” added the colonel, “our lives depend upon what this message says.”

This is what Daoulas wrote: “The lads returned this morning, after hailing the Spanish vessel, which is now cruising at the entrance of the bay. A shepherd’s boy from Plomodiern told me that some soldiers were guarding the bridge and had left sentinels all along the shore. If I return to the boat they may let me pass; but in going down they would think that I had you with me, and would shoot us both. If we went by land, they’d stop us. It is for that reason that I send this shepherd’s boy, who is as cunning as a fox, and will lower this paper to you on the end of a tow-line. The Spaniard told my lads that he could not hold out against the high wind, and would sail out to sea before sunset. You must take advantage of the chance, and do as I will now tell you. Our barque is hidden by the rocks at Tréfuntec, and those cursed police spies have not caught sight of it. All you have to do is to get to it. Come down to the river quietly by catching on to the spokes of the mill-wheel; plunge in and swim till you pass the turn, which is twenty fathoms off; you will then be beyond the fire of the spies’ muskets. Then go down with the tide to the white stone which you know of on the left shore, under the hillock where the curate of Saint-Anne-la-Palue had a cross placed last year. You can land there, and will have but a little way to walk to reach Tréfuntec. We shall be ready to start as soon as you come on board, and two hours afterwards we shall catch up with the Spaniard. Start soon, colonel; I and my lads are waiting for you, and we have made a vow to go on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame du Folgoat if we succeed in getting you safe and sound on board the ship and under the Spanish flag.”

"So we must use the wheel-spokes to get down into the river," muttered Terne.

"Yes," said the colonel, "but look at this." And taking off his coat, La Jonquière hoisted it on the end of a pole which he had near by, and placed his cap on the top; then, passing the manikin through the window, he moved it so as to imitate the movements of a man trying to go down by the boards of the dam. The strange scarecrow no sooner appeared than two shots came from the right shore. La Jonquière lowered his manikin to let the enemy believe that their shots had taken effect, and then carefully brought the figure back into the mill again. "A hole in the hat and one in the left side of the coat," said he, quietly. "Those rascals take very good aim." And as Terne gazed at him in surprise, he said: "This is an old stratagem which I learned in Spain. Now, what do you think of going down by the wheel?"

"I think that it will suffice if one of us devotes himself to save the rest. Let it be me."

"Or me," said Liévin. "Besides, the feat is not, perhaps, so dangerous as it seems. I can see the two sentinels reloading their muskets now. We only have to show the manikin again and draw their fire, then leap upon the dam and close the paddle-door before a second shot is fired."

Just then the chevalier turned and saw Gudule behind him, pale, and with her eyes sparkling with fever. "You here, my child!" he said.

"The sound of those shots awoke me, and I thought that you perhaps needed me here."

"We shall need your agility," replied La Jonquière, eagerly, "for you must go down into the river by catching at the spokes of this wheel, and then hold on to the shoulders of one of us while we swim along."

"I am ready," replied the girl.

"It is understood, then," said La Jonquière, "that you will follow us by this road. But the beauty who is asleep upstairs will not, perhaps, be able to do as you can."

"The chevalier will persuade her," said Gudule, quietly, "and will help her to climb down and swim. You will do the same for me, will you not?" added she, addressing Liévin.

"With all my heart!" replied the Fleming, "and all the more willingly as, sixteen years ago——"

He did not finish, for a look from Terne silenced him, and he remained mute and troubled, glancing alternately at the unhappy girl, whom he had left with his own hands in the streets of Liége when a babe, and at the savage Blanche-Barbe, whom he had some reason to reproach himself with having wronged, and whom he saw, from the hole in the wall, standing upon the opposite shore with his men. The ex-tavern-keeper seemed to be commanding the whole troop, and Larfaillé did not appear, so that the fugitives never suspected his presence in the ranks of the enemy. They did not even know that he still lived. "Come," said La Jonquière, "let us prepare for leaving without delay. The Fleming's plan is the best, and we will carry it out in every particular. To close the sluice you must withdraw this bar, which keeps the paddle door open. A child could do it."

"I shall not fail," said the chevalier, impatiently.

"Good! then I have only to remind you of Daoulas's instructions to swim on vigorously and land beside a white rock on the left shore, at three hundred fathoms hence, at the foot of a hillock surmounted by a cross."

"I shall know the place."

"It will be all the easier to recognise, as I shall go before you to show

you the way. You can follow with your friend from Brabant, and you must both take charge of the young girls."

"That is agreed."

"One word more. Which couple will start last?"

"Ourselves, is it not so?" said Gudule to Liévin.

"Yes, certainly," replied the latter.

"Then, Liévin," resumed La Jonquière, "do me the favour to put your hand on the lever and hold it, while we make our descent by means of the spokes of the wheel."

"And if the scoundrels who are mounting guard down there dart out upon the bridge I must press upon the lever and pitch them all into the water, must I not?"

"That is what you'll have to do; but even if they do not attempt the assault, you can have the pleasure of upsetting the foot-bridge before following us, for I do not wish the rascals should poke their noses in here after we have gone."

"Be easy as to that, I shall not fail to prevent it, and I hold the lever."

"All is well; we now have only to show them the manikin's nose, and it is I who have the puppet-show in hand. Are you ready, chevalier?" asked the colonel, extending his dressed-up stick.

"I am," said Terne, in a firm voice.

"You know that the dam is on the right of the door. You can reach it by a leap and climb back here by holding on with your hands?"

"Yes, yes, I know all that! The manikin—quick!" exclaimed the chevalier, who was anxious to finish without giving the young girl time to understand the peril he would be in. At the moment when he was ranging himself against the edge of the opening, so as to be able to leap out, he felt that Gudule took his hand and pressed it to her lips. At the same moment musket shots on the shore on the opposite side were heard, fired at the manikin which the colonel was moving up and down. "The fools have fallen into the trap," exclaimed La Jonquière, triumphantly; "leap out, chevalier, as quickly as you can, and take advantage of their stupidity."

Terne made a step towards the door and bent over to go down to the dam. The leap was not dangerous or difficult, for the beams which crossed the paddle-box were three feet at most below the opening. As for the mechanism for preventing the passage of the current, it was of the simplest kind, and Terne did not need any force to make it work, as he had only to draw back a wooden bar of medium thickness, curved against the upper log of the paddle-box. The danger came from the opposite side, as he had to work under the enemy's fire. But the enemy at that moment was visible in the shape of two sentinels only, and both of them, deceived by La Jonquière's stratagem, had discharged their muskets. "Quick, sir, quick," said Liévin, who had one eye still upon the opening and one hand on the lever; "I see another of the rascals coming up."

Terne started forward, but as he did so, and was about to pass beyond the sheltering wall, Gudule slipped under his arm and leaped upon the barrier before he could hold her back. "Ah!" exclaimed the chevalier, "she has heard all and is sacrificing herself for my sake!"

He tried to dart after her, but the colonel seized him by the belt and held him firmly, saying, "Do not stir; if you do she will be killed!"

"Let me go!" said Terne, struggling.

"No," replied the intractable La Jonquière, "you shall not go. Do you not understand that they won't dare to fire upon a woman; but if you

appear there will be a general volley, and you know that the balls spare neither age nor sex." The chevalier understood, and ceased to struggle. His soul was in his eyes. He looked at the heroic girl whom he could no longer protect, and prayed Heaven to watch over her at that terrible moment. She had with one leap crossed the space which separated them from the paddle-box, and without hesitating, and with a skill and energy that were simply incredible, had seized the stay and was striving to move it. It was yielding, though somewhat heavy; in a few seconds the support would fall. "The sentinels are loading their muskets again," said Liévin, "but the brave girl will have finished before the powder is in the pan. Yes, yes, cram away, my pretty scoundrels! cram in your bullets, you gallows-birds! You will not have time to fire."

Gudule was still working at the support. "Courage, my child!" called out the colonel.

"Tell her to make haste!" exclaimed the Fleming. "That scamp that I pointed out to you just now is running towards the entrance of the bridge. He has a musket in his hand—he is stopping—he is standing on tip-toe in order to get a better view. He is raising his head. Heaven help us! it is Blanche-Barbe!"

"Ah! the wretch!"

"Be easy; he is a knowing rascal, and will save his shot for us."

"No!" cried Liévin, "he is raising his gun, taking aim, and—"

"He is too late," interrupted La Jonquière.

Gudule, by an effort, had at last succeeded in withdrawing the bar. The paddle-box, dragged down by its weight, fell with a heavy sound, and the water, finding no further opening, began to bubble up above the barrier. "Stoop! stoop! he is about to fire!" At this last warning from Liévin, Terne, violently pushing back the colonel, tore himself from his grasp, ran to the opening and threw himself upon the barrier to cover Gudule with his own body. But, prompt though he was in leaping down, Blanche-Barbe's bullet came before he reached her. The poor girl, struck full in the breast, sank down and remained prostrate upon the beams, which she stained with her life-blood as she fell.

"He has killed his own daughter, the infamous ruffian!" exclaimed the colonel; "but we are saved, for the barrier is closed."

Whilst La Jonquière, inaccessible to tender feelings, was coolly setting forth the result thus attained, Terne, wild with grief, was raising the expiring Gudule in his arms. A bloody foam already appeared upon the young girl's lips, and her face was covered with the pallor of death. "Gudule, forgive me!" cried the chevalier, pressing her in his arms. She opened her eyes and looked for the last time at the man whom she had so deeply loved. Terne saw that if he moved she would expire at once, and he kept perfectly still. He held up Gudule's head and wept bitterly. "Lean over me," murmured the dying girl. "I have not strength to speak, and I wish to say farewell—nearer—nearer—." The chevalier bent over her, and her lips touched his cheek. "Heaven has granted my prayer in calling me away," said she, so low that Terne could scarcely catch her words; "it is taking me from this world, in which there is now no place for me. I bless Heaven—and I go above to pray for you—for her—you will be happy, for you love her—and she loves you—."

"Gudule!" sobbed Terne, whose heart seemed to break within him.

"I loved you, too——" Then the death-cold lips met his, and he felt the departing soul of Gudule exhale in this, their first and last kiss.

"Take care, chevalier!" called out La Jonquière.

The warning was lost in the noise of loud firing. The soldiers on the right shore had fired in a platoon. Blanche-Barbe had ordered them to fire upon the dead to reach the living. But, by a miraculous chance, Terne was not touched. The thick boards of the paddle-box sheltered him, and the bullets struck the side of the mill without hurting any one. Gudule's devotion had not been in vain, for the river, abruptly turned from its course, was now flowing toward the right shore, and the wheel no longer turned. "Leave the body there, and come to us!" called out the colonel, as the smoke of the firing began to disperse. The bowmen could be seen, with Blanche-Barbe at the head, grouped at the entrance of the bridge. The chevalier took Gudule in his arms, rose up, and in spite of the burden he bore, succeeded in reaching the window-door.

"Are you mad to burden yourself thus, when we have not a moment to lose in getting down by means of the wheel and swimming to the Caillou Blanc?" said La Jonquière, as he appeared.

Terne, instead of replying, turned to Liévin. "Swear to me that you will save Violet!" he exclaimed, in a broken voice.

"I swear it, and I understand what you are about to do. That poor girl's body must not be left here, and the daughter of Prince de Horn must not see it. Go, chevalier, go, and trust to me to bring Violet to you and to avenge Gudule!"

Liévin had not finished speaking when Terne seized the spokes of the wheel with one hand. With the other he upheld the dear dead girl. This would have been an impossible feat so long as the water, passing under the wheel, made it turn against the tide. But it was easy, now that the motionless wheel allowed the chevalier to slip into the river with Gudule's body. "The madman has succeeded!" muttered the colonel, looking at him, "in five minutes he will land with his burden. Now it is our turn. Don't let these rascals have time to fire upon us again."

"Go, if you choose, sir," said Liévin. "I have a duty to fulfil."

"Good! the other girl whom you have promised to save. As you please, my friend! I'm off, for my part!" said La Jonquière, slipping through the opening to follow Terne.

Liévin let the colonel go without a word. Blanche-Barbe and his soldiers did not observe anything, for the wall of the sluice hid the wheel, and their entire attention was fixed upon the foot-bridge which they now seemed about to cross. Violet had not appeared, and must have been in a deep sleep not to have noticed the firing. The garret in which she was resting had no windows, and external sounds did not penetrate there. "I can save her much more surely presently," muttered Liévin, with the resolute air of a man who has taken a great resolution. The corner where he stood with his hand upon the lever was but three paces from the door. Liévin stepped forward and showed himself. Before him, on the left, was the mill-wheel, still somewhat shaken by the passage of Terne and La Jonquière; at his feet was the barrier stained with Gudule's blood; a little to the right, and level with the boarding of the room where he stood, was the bridge, at the end of which the bowmen were grouped. Liévin counted six men ranged behind Blanche-Barbe. He also saw their horses under the shed beside his own bay, the chevalier's chestnut, and the grey mare, which had carried the two young girls. Scarcely had he appeared at the opening when Blanche-Barbe turned to order a general fire. But Liévin at once called out: "Do

not fire ! I surrender ! ” At the same time he stepped somewhat forward upon the foot-bridge, and added, holding up his hands : “ You see that I have no arms.”

“ Come to us, then,” said the ex-tavern-keeper.

“ Not without knowing what conditions you make with me,” replied Liévin, returning to his post against the wall, in order to secure shelter.

“ The conditions are that your lives are spared, excepting those of Colonel La Jonquiére and Chevalier du Terne.”

“ The colonel is dead. The first fire of your sentinels killed him. The chevalier was severely wounded in taking up the body of the young girl whom you shot upon the barrier. There is only a dying man here, and a young girl and myself—who am simply the servant of Chevalier du Terne de Grandpré.”

“ Then I promise you nothing ; you must yield unconditionally.”

“ I understand that I am lost,” replied Liévin, “ but I do not wish to leave my master, who is dying here, behind these walls. If you wish to have us, come and take us.”

“ Follow me, all of you ! ” shouted Blanche-Barbe to his men. Without further hesitation, the innkeeper darted upon the foot-bridge. The archers followed him, two by two. As they advanced Liévin recoiled. He wished to place his hand upon the lever which served to overthrow the bridge. At this moment he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and turning, found himself face to face with Violet, who, like himself, was standing in the door-way. The sunlight, piercing the fog, fell upon her face, and Blanche-Barbe, recognising her, uttered a cry of rage. “ Oh ! you rascal ! ” he howled, “ you told me she was dead.”

“ It is not she who is dead,” replied Liévin, “ it is not she whom you killed ; it was your own daughter.”

“ You lie ! I have no daughter ! ”

“ You had one who was stolen from you on the night of the 9th of December, 1703, and she has just died by your own hand. I tell you this, I, Liévin, formerly squire to Philip Emmanuel, Prince de Horn.”

“ Liévin ! ” cried Blanche-Barbe ; “ ah ! I know you now, you wretch ! and you shall pay for what your infamous master has done ! ” And he raised his musket, but had not even time to level it. With a rapid motion Liévin weighed upon the lever. The bridge fell at once, and Blanche-Barbe, and all those who followed him, were thrown into the river. Gudule was avenged. A dull sound arose and some outcry, and then there was silence. The bridge in its fall had crushed those who had been upon it. The current bore the fragments of the bridge and the dead bodies to the sea. Liévin rose up, and with a pale face and wild eyes looked at the water flowing below, and carrying the “ brown-coats ” away with it. “ What have you done ? Oh ! Heaven ! what have you done ? ” exclaimed Violet, in a trembling voice.

“ I have saved your life,” replied the Fleming, suddenly recalled to himself ; “ the man whom I have sent to his account would have given you back to the archers, and we should have been hanged.”

“ He was my father,” murmured Violet, hiding her face in her hands.

Liévin fell at the feet of his master’s daughter. “ Your father was Philip Emanuel, Prince de Horn,” said he, solemnly ; “ I salute you as the heiress of the house I have served from childhood, and wish to serve till my dying day. The chevalier is safe, and we will now go to find him.”

“ Where is Gudule ? ”

"She is with him," replied Liévin, quickly, seeing the necessity of hiding the sad truth from Violet. "Let us go, mademoiselle, let us go without losing a moment; the barque is below ready to set sail." And as he saw that the young girl hesitated, he added: "He is waiting for us."

"Take me away!" exclaimed Violet, wildly.

Heaven had been merciful in sending her into that lethargic slumber. She had thus been spared the frightful spectacle of Gudule's death, and of the dying farewell of a beloved rival. It was sad enough to have seen the engulfing of Blanche-Barbe and his soldiers in the river.

The descent was effected without accident, and the enemy not being nigh to fire upon the swimmers, Liévin was not even obliged to dive more than once. In a few moments he reached the shore at the foot of the cross of Sainte-Anne-la-Palue. Violet kept above the water by supporting herself upon his shoulders, and seemed less weary with the swim than anxious as to the fate of her friends. Liévin also was in haste to find the chevalier, and even the colonel, who alone could dispose of Daoulas's boat. He helped his companion to climb upon the hillock at the top of which was the cross described in the miller's letter. When they reached the summit, they each uttered an exclamation of joy and surprise. The sea was before them. Beyond a narrow plain the vast bay of Douarnenez rolled its blue waves, scarcely fringed with snowy foam by the south-western breeze. In the open between Cape La Chèvre and the Pointe du Raz there was a ship, with all sail set, and flying the Spanish colours. Quite near the shore, at a few hundred fathoms from the cross, was a boat with a long, red flag at its mast-head. This was the signal mentioned by La Jonquière. "They are waiting for us; let us make haste!" said Liévin.

And he dragged Violet along by the hand. She was as eager as he to reach the boat. The ground sloped slightly, and then rose, forming a range of sandy hills, which they soon crossed. Beyond these hillocks a strange and mournful picture was seen. The sea was high, and Daoulas's boat was gently rocking in the freshening breeze. But it had only one sailor aboard, with the colonel, who was standing upright at the bows with his arms crossed and his eyes fixed upon the horizon. At twenty paces from the shore, near the sand-hills, were Daoulas's two sons, leaning, one upon a pickaxe, and the other upon a spade, and looking at Chevalier du Terne, who was kneeling beside an open grave. Liévin understood all, and wished to prevent Violet from witnessing the mournful spectacle of Gudule's burial. "Come," cried he, endeavouring to make her retreat with him.

But she broke from him, ran to the grave, uttered a cry of horror at seeing the generous girl—who had died to serve her—lying on her bed of sand, and fell fainting into the arms of the chevalier. "Ah!" said Liévin, who followed her closely, "we have come too soon, since my master's daughter has seen this poor body; help me to bear her to the boat. If she revives here, the sight may kill her also."

Liévin signed to the two lads, who at once came to his aid. An instant later Violet lay upon the deck of the boat, and old Daoulas, leaving the rudder to one of his sons, moistened her brow with sea water to revive her. La Jonquière meanwhile hastened to Liévin and asked him many questions, without heeding the young girl extended at his feet. "They are all in the depths of the river; I let the bridge down when they came up," said the Fleming, laconically.

"Now, that is lucky, on my word!" cried the colonel; "for that confounded chevalier, with his misplaced sentimentality, came near having us

all hanged. But what does it matter? We have no time to lose in lamentation, and Blanche-Barbe's daughter has been wept over long enough. Jump out, my friend, go and tell Terne, who looks as though he had lost his mind, that his beauty is here, and bring him to me." Liévin was about to obey, when the colouel caught hold of his arm, and said in a furious tone: "You have lied to me, you scoundrel! they were not all drowned, for there comes one of them now!"

Indeed, a man had just appeared at the top of the sand-hills, and that man was Larfaille. After having led the pursuit to the foot of the Montagnes-Noires, he had found that he was on the wrong road. The lad from Carhaix, who served him as guide, had declared that the miller was often in a boat, moored at the river's mouth, and Larfaille had conceived the unfortunate idea of leaving the command of his troop to Blanche-Barbe, and of going to look for the suspicious craft. Some fishermen had shown him the Spanish caravel, cruising about, and Daoulas's boat, moored at the Pointe-de-Tréfouet, and flying a signal flag. He had thereupon made haste to send his guide to Blanche-Barbe with orders to send him three of his men, and to continue guarding the mill bridge with the three others. Then, impatient at having to wait for his messenger's return, he had crossed the river by swimming over, and he was now coming up, resolved to do all he could to prevent the party embarking. When, from the top of the sand-hills, he saw four or five men upon the deck, and but one ashore, he rushed down upon the latter with his sword drawn, shouting: "Surrender, my men are coming up!"

"Cut your moorings, Daoulas!" called out La Jonquière, quickly. "We shall see how the chevalier fares, but we cannot wait for him long."

Terne had raised his head at Larfaille's shout, and had crossed his arms without apparently thinking of defending himself. He had recognised Gudule's supposed father. A moment later the two beings whom the poor dead girl had most loved stood face to face. "Ah! I have you now—you who stole my daughter from me!" cried the detective.

Then the chevalier, instead of trying even to turn aside the sword which threatened to pierce his breast, pointed to the open grave. Larfaille stepped forward, and at sight of Gudule, sleeping the everlasting sleep, dropped his sword, and fell upon the sand. His reason had departed.

At the same moment Liévin and one of the Daoulas lads caught hold of the chevalier and bore him on board the boat, in spite of his cries. The moorings were cut, the sails spread, and the boat flew like an arrow over the water. An hour later the Spanish ship was hailed, and five days afterwards the fugitives landed in Spaiu. La Jonquière went to the East Indies, and made a fortune in commanding the troops of a powerful raja. Larfaille, his enemy, ended his days in the Hospital of Quimper, without recovering his reason. Liévin grew old in the service of the chevalier, who married the daughter of Prince de Horn. Violet and Louis du Terne were happy. Gudule, on her side, had been happy in dying; for to those who love and are not loved in return, a grave amid the sands of the seashore is a better thing than life.

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